THE ADVENT

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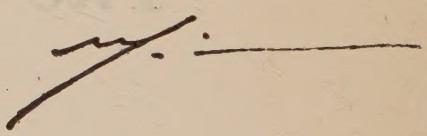
The Advent

All depends upon the choice of the force that you allow to make use of you as its instrument. And the choice has to be made every moment of your life.



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April 1951

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Night, splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven
In silver peace, possessed her luminous reign.
She brooded through her stillness on a thought
Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of light,
And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, BOOK XII, EPILOGUE)

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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

EDITORIAL

DARKNESS TO LIGHT *

THE Darkness is the measure of the Light. The world as it is is exactly the opposite of what it has to be and shall be. And in order to be what it shall be it had to become what it is now, just not that which it will be. The antipodes go together unavoidably: the depth of the precipice is the precise measure of the height. Man's fall represents the ascent he has to make, he is destined to make.

Hurdles and obstacles are put there in the way: not merely to test your strength, but to train it, to increase it, to discipline it. Difficulties abound precisely because by overcoming them you attain to the fullness of your perfection. You have been built with elements and forces that are exactly in keeping with what you are expected to do with them: you are placed in the midst of conditions and circumstances that are absolutely proportionate to what you have to realise. Indeed you carry within yourself all the difficulties that are necessary to make your realisation perfection itself.

* Based on the Mother's talk

When you receive a blow, do not draw back or blink and sink down: hold up your head with courage and fortitude and say to yourself, here is another opportunity given to take another step forward. The blow is a finger of light pointed towards a dark spot to be illumined, a weak link that has to be forged anew. In meeting and surmounting a difficulty you add another degree to your ascension, another sinew as it were to your muscle. Remember a difficulty is never out of proportion to your strength: it comes in the exact measure of your power to face it. It is your mind, your notion that makes the contrary suggestion, a kind of illusion possesses you that you are beyond your depth and must go adrift.

You may not be able to do the ideal thing at a given moment. You may not command the perfect gesture that is expected of you in a set of circumstances: the Divine may seem to be veiled from you and you do not hear the direct voice. But it does not matter. What is expected of you is to do your best, do the best that you are capable of at that moment. The highest that is present to you, the summit available for the time and under the circumstances—that should be the source and inspiration of your act. Act on the heights where you stand and aspire for higher heights.

TYPES OF MEDITATION *

The first is to think on one subject in a continuous logical order. When, for example, you have to find the solution of a problem, you go step by step from one operation to another in a chain till you finally arrive at the conclusion. The thought is withdrawn from all other objects and is canalised along a single line. This is a kind of meditation, although it may not be usually known by that name. It marks a progress in the make-up of the human consciousness. For normally the mind moves at random, thoughts run about on many subjects, various, contrary and contradictory, from moment to moment. There is neither direction, consistency or organisation: it is a confused mass of incomplete, half-formed thoughts. The control and organisation of this mass, to start with, in a limited sphere and in a definite direction, the rejection of the unnecessary and the irrelevent and the marshalling and ordering of the required elements form the first exercise towards mental growth. All high intelligence, all effective wielding of thought power needs this discipline. Under the present circumstances of the world

* Based on the Mother's talk

the school-life gives the best opportunity for this development. This is a meditation that should be obligatory and universal.

The next type we may call concentration, instead of meditation. Here we do not pursue a thought-line, but fix the thought upon one object unmoved. It means a further process of withdrawing the consciousness from its habitual outgoing and dispersive movement. The thought is held at a point and attention is focussed upon it: it is continuous and unbroken attention, for example, upon an idea, a phrase (mantra) or an image. One can concentrate also upon a physical point, say, fixing the gaze upon the tip of one's nose, or on a luminous point outside etc. In this discipline the whole mind is gathered together and focussed: or, everything else is shut out leaving only one thing upon which all the light of the consciousness is directed. It is a stand-still consciousness, like a flame erect and immobile in a windless place.

There is a third grade when the mind becomes a void, all thoughts being driven out, all vibrations tranquillised. It is a wide silence suffused with a still luminosity. The operation is difficult. For it means a kind of continuous and methodical drainage or rarefication which takes more or less a very long time. First you throw out well-formed ideas and notions, processes and products of reasoning and judgment—the bigger waves, as it were; as soon as these subside you find there are smaller waves below or behind—half-formed thoughts, budding ideas, fugitive notions and so on; when these too are quieted down, you come across still another layer of smaller ripples of thought, close to sensations, nervous reactions, vibrations of the brain-mind, rudimentary percepts etc. etc. One may go on like that if not *ad infinitum*, at least, to a considerable length. One arrives in the end at what is practically a vacuum, to all intents and purposes a silent mind. Even then it is a difficult and arduous process and may not be as absolute as one may expect. There are other surer and even perhaps easier processes to attain the same end. Thus instead of striving and struggling and forcing your will upon the restless waves, you simply relax yourself, by-pass them as it were, await and aspire and open yourself towards the Silence that is above: call for the silence with trust and reliance and it comes not unoften as a massive inundation, a glacial sweep and automatically overwhelms you, drowning and filling you from top to toe. There is also another way: to contact, to enter into the Mother's presence. Mother's Presence means all the realisations to which we aspire concretised, brought down, near to us, within our human reach. We have not to travel far and wide, mount to

inaccessible heights, labour and strain—with blood and sweat and tears—to get what we want: all the gettings are ready-made there in our atmosphere, we have only to know and perceive, open something in us for them to flow in. That is perhaps the action of Grace: silence, absolute silence, not only in the mind, but in the whole being, can come this way too.

The last process gives us the clue to the fourth type of meditation—the type, in fact, which is recommended for us, both because it is the easiest—following as it does the line of least resistance, also because it gives the fullness of the result demanded. Instead of trying to manipulate the mental force with its personal will and effort, instead of seeking to control and command the consciousness, the best thing to do would be to remain quiet as far as it is normally possible for one without struggle and then turn the gaze to the other side, deep inward or high upward, become more conscious of the light, the Will that brought you to this Path, to be alive with the secret delight, the flaming aspiration that is there within you behind all the turbid turmoil of the surface life and consciousness. This Presence and Guidance will of itself place before you the elements and movements that are to be rejected and those that are to be accepted and given your sincere assent help you in doing the necessary gesture. Indeed if you do not resist too much, it will throw out what is to be thrown out and bring in what is to be brought in. That is how the instrument will be cleansed and refined. Silence will be put in, for that is the basis; but not silence alone, for it will be unified with a new dynamism expressing the Divine's will—personal choice there will be none, neither for absolute quietude nor for mere activity.

THE CONSCIOUS BEING*

The conscious being in us is truly the psychic being. But it is behind at present and out of the picture. What is normally conscious then is the mind, a part of it which has got the light, is illumined. We are conscious through this portion, and even we identify ourselves with it, know and feel it as our self, as "I".

The mind, however, has a central consciousness which may be called the Witness Mind, the Purusha in the mind. It stands apart and observes whatever is happening in the mind and in other parts as well; it is in fact the observer of the whole *adhar*. The other parts are the vital and the physical.

* Based on the Mother's talk

The vital too has its own central consciousness, its witness Purusha, which observes all the vital movements and also through its own angle the other parts. Likewise the Physical has a Purusha and it too observes through its own consciousness. The mental Purusha says, "I see I am thinking, reasoning etc."; the vital Purusha says, "I see I am angry, violent or enjoying, energising etc."; the physical Purusha says "I see I am acting, walking, running etc.". Now each of these three Purushas, in an ordinary person, stands separately, each is conscious in its own way; they are not clearly conscious of each other; they intermix, but not happily, they are more often than not at cross purposes. Very rarely are they unified and harmonised or bound together as a team for serving a common purpose, a single aim. That union and harmonisation can be done only through the supreme Purusha, the Divine Witness who is the true conscious Being, the one Purusha behind or above all the others, whose light first of all centralises in the psychic being and then through it is canalised into its delegates or emanations on the lower levels, the mind, the vital and the physical.

What is consciousness? It is the inverse of Inconscience. It is the creative essence of the universe: without consciousness there is no creation. Inconscience means non-existence. The supreme Non-manifest becomes conscious of itself, that is, objectifies itself, sees itself created or reflected in multiple centres: that is the origin of all creation. By consciousness all is, by unconsciousness nothing is. Consciousness is light, consciousness is life.

The original consciousness is one and indivisible and at its highest potential. But when its gets devolved and divided, i. e., individualised, it gets at the same time diffracted and minimised, like the reflections in a rough mirror. What we normally understand by consciousness is this diminished degree of it in the individual. But although diminished and diffracted in many forms and modes, the basic consciousness is still the divine consciousness which is there behind and at the origin of all the partial formulations. It is through this core of Divine Presence—which is nothing else than the psychic—that the individual maintains and develops its contact with the Divine, grows into the fullness of the divine consciousness even as an individual and earthly embodiment.

THE STORY OF CREATION *

Consciousness is the source and basis of creation. Even the most material object, apparently unconscious, the stone, for example, has inherent in it a vibration of consciousness. Where there is absolutely no consciousness, it is the Inconscient. If you ever descend into the Inconscient, that is to say, further down the scale from the inanimate stone, you will know the difference. The gulf between the stone and the Inconscient is very much, very much indeed, greater than that between the stone and man. For it is a secret consciousness that links man to the stone, but beyond there is a hiatus, something unbridgeable. The Inconscient is the Void, the absolute zero ("Inane", Sri Aurobindo names it in *Savitri*): it is not substance, it is pure negation. Consciousness is at the back of the material universe: without that consciousness there would not be the marvellous organisation that is found within the material particle of atom. The Inconscient is pre-existent to the material creation.

The one indivisible Reality and its pure consciousness: that is the origin. This Supreme Consciousness chose to objectify himself, bring himself out of himself, witness himself in play—the Upanishad says, the One wished to have a second, a companion to himself, *sa dwitiyam aichhat*. This power of self-objectification is a free-will given to the consciousness to move out of its original unified status and move abroad and away, as it liked. Thus the Supreme saw himself as his own power of self-manifestation, and that is the Mother Consciousness, Adya Shakti, Aditi—consciousness-power, which again in her forward creative urge expressed herself in the first four major Emanations (Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati). But this free urge, free to separate itself and proceed in an independent movement of self-expression and evolution precipitated itself immediately, almost as a logical consequence of its career of free choice, into the Denial, the Negation that is inconscience. So, against the Supreme, the Divine Consciousness, there stood out the utter unconsciousness: the Light disappeared into absolute Darkness. It was the result of a self-choice in the consciousness: but the end was the very opposite of consciousness.

It was a dead silence, more silent than Death and more dead than Silence itself. And it was utter helplessness and hopelessness....The Divine Con-

* Based on the Mother's talk

sciousness—Aditi—saw the terrible line of destiny that freedom has taken and ended in: she could stand it no longer and a cry went out for succour, for help. And the answer came immediate, a ray shot down from the one supreme consciousness and entered into the womb of Inconscience. Lo, the miracle, Matter was born, the first creation, the first manifestation of the Supreme Grace. Matter holds in it the spark of consciousness that is to grow and unfold itself, shine more and more into the enveloping gloom of Inconscience, illumining it farther and farther, pushing its frontiers ever backward and away.

The birth of Matter coincided with another descent of the Supreme Consciousness; it is a descent in graded stages linking up the highest to the lowest through intermediate formations: they are telescoped into Matter so that Matter might lodge and express them gradually through its inherent developing consciousness till the highest is revealed and embodied here as it is always self-revealed at the highest.

In the graded descent, in the hierarchy of planes and levels, there appeared forces and beings also proper to each domain. The earliest, the first among them are the Asuras, rather the original Asuras—the first quaternary (some memory of them seemed to linger in the Greek legend of Chronos and his brood). For they embody the powers of division, of Inconscience: they are the Affirmations of the Negation. Against the Asuras there came and ranged—at the first line of division, on the one side of the descent of the Light—the first godheads, the major powers and personalities of the Divine Consciousness. The battle of the gods and Titans for the possession of the earth has been going on ever since. The end will come one day: it will mean the dissolution of the forces of Negation, at least within the earthly sphere, and the establishment there of the reign of Light.

EARTH A SYMBOL*

The earth is the centre of the material universe. It has been created for concentrating the force that is to transform Matter. It is the symbol of the divine potentiality in Matter. As we have said, the earth was created through a direct intervention of the Divine Consciousness: it is on the earth alone that there is and can be the direct contact with the Divine. The earth absorbs and develops and radiates the divine light; its radiation spreads

* Based on the Mother's talk

through space and extends wherever there is Matter. The material universe shares, to some extent, the gift that the earth brings—the light and harmony of the Divine Consciousness. But it is upon the Earth alone that there is the full and final flowering of that consciousness.

The psychic being is found on the earth alone, for it is a product of the earth: it is the touch of the Divine upon Matter. The psychic being is a child of the Earth: it is born and grows upon Earth, it is native to nowhere else. Still when it develops sufficiently and becomes an adult individuality, it can go to other physical domains, visit other planets, for example.

ASSUMPTA EST MARIA

Mary is taken up into Heaven—bodily. This is the dogma that the Catholic Church has promulgated and raised to the status of an irrefutable and inalienable Truth. Are we then marching backward, back to the dark Middle Ages? We thought we had advanced far enough and Science and Reason have cleansed even the Church Mysteries and put some daylight into them. But it looks as though nothing of the kind has been done. For, here is the credo—the dogma—of the modern man:

"The very essence of Western civilisation from the Renaissance onwards is the right of individual judgment, the use of the critical faculty. The belief that truth has not been finally revealed, but must be discovered by a process of inquiry, experiment and reason, is basic to our civilisation. We are Protestants or nothing, both in religion and politics".*

Now, what has the Church, the religious mind to say in the matter? It must be remembered that there are among believers not mere sentimental obscurantists, but even eminent scientists and rationalists. How do these react to what appears to be an evident absurdity?

There is an old-world position, enunciated by the great Saint Augustine: I believe precisely because it is absurd, precisely because it is impossible. For—this is how the non-rationalist reasons—the world of the Spirit is not the world of matter, not only so, things are and happen there exactly in a manner contrary and opposite to what is expected here below. And do not even the Vedas declare that things are topsy-turvy in the higher consciousness, the spirit view—the roots lie above pointing upward, the

* The Assumption of the Virgin. "*The New Statesman and Nation*", Aug. 26, 1950

branches spread out downward? Indeed the sun shines not there, nor the moon, nor the stars nor these fires: things are not of the kind that we worship here.

This is an intransigent extreme position with which there is nothing to argue about or question. But there are less exalted positions that have tried to explain the phenomenon to the rational mind, to demonstrate the reasonableness of the mystery. Obviously, some say, it is not the physical body that is physically carried to heaven; for then it would be only a spot in the physical sky overhead that one could reach and this phenomenon of physical levitation, even if possible, would be meaningless. The whole thing is a symbol—a parable, like that of the talents, for example. The exact sense may not be very clear, or may be different to different people. But the general sense, that of a soul upon earth regaining its status near or in God—seems to be evident enough.

A less simple, more subtle or recondite explanation is also given. For it is urged the stress upon the body—the bodily translation—should not be overlooked. Hence it is said although it cannot be the actual physical body that is carried into heaven, it may very well be the *subtle body*. Here we have to enter into a somewhat occult subject and what may appear as a suprarational explanation. The subtle body is that composed of subtle elements which survives the dissolution of the physical body after death: it maintains its identity, at least in highly evolved beings and may even be immortal. The soul is immortal in itself always and ever: immortality is an eternal and inalienable attribute of the soul. But immortality can also be attained by the soul in its lower and more concrete formulations, for example, as a mental individual, a vital individual or even a subtle physical individual: a purely physical immortality is also not ruled out as a possibility. The elixir of life sought after in the Middle Ages, the occult practices of a certain class of mystics—some Tantriks, for example—have in view the discovery of a procedure to immortalise the soul's vehicle also.

There are many legends describing the physical union of the devotee with the Divine. The ways are various in which this union—the final integral and irrevocable union is effected. The body goes up into flames and is absorbed into the deity (usually his image or symbol). Mirabai, Tukaram, Andal ended or consummated their physical existence in this way. Chaitanya chose a watery grave, it is said: the deity appeared to him in and through that element and he offered his body to be dissolved in it. This dissolution of the physical body is not regarded as mere death, the

phenomenon that closes the life cycle of an ordinary human being: for it is alleged in the cases above referred to that no trace of the body is found after the *death*, the dissolution. An explanation on the occult line can be attempted. *Yogenante tanutyajam*, says Kalidasa: the body is given up through Yoga. The soul with the inner being withdraws from the body in full consciousness and with a free and self-luminous will, even as the pith is taken out of the outer sheath of a reed, in the image of the Upanishad; it goes into the subtler worlds of its own and dwells there, the body remaining behind an inert mass and thrown away. But there may be another way in which the body could be disposed of and that is perhaps what is hinted at in the phenomenon of dissolution described above. We know of the phenomenon of dematerialisation in modern Science: material particles having a mass are transmuted into light particles having no mass. In the same way, the occultists say, the body too can be etherealised, subtilised or dematerialised. Highly evolved Yogins can do that. Their consciousness takes up, permeates and enfolds the body, as in a chrysalis, and the brooding heat of conscious energy transmutes the base material into radiant matter. The transfiguration spoken of in respect of Mirabai, Tukaram, Andal and the Virgin Mary might have been of this kind.

We can look at the subject from another standpoint. The insistence on the bodily translation in so many spiritual disciplines, however absurd and crazy it may sound to the normal mind has a especial meaning, it is not a piece of mere medieval superstition and black (or white) magic. It signifies an aspiration in the human consciousness, a possibility to be realised that is on the way of being realised in the course of earth's evolution. It is the vision of the earth-consciousness itself, the material body of man being changed and transmuted into the divine substance. The body, Matter, the world of physical existence is essentially divine: it is a fact in the inner consciousness. This inner essential reality has to be and is being brought out and established in the outer consciousness, in the material world itself. That is the grand finale to which the symphony of creation is moving in its evolutionary rhythm.

The Virgin, in the esoteric Christian doctrine, is the earth principle, the material consciousness that gave birth to the conscious soul moving onward on the calvary of its progress in evolution towards perfect union with the Divine, the Father Supreme (the Holy Ghost being the Cosmic Power of the Divine helping the progress). The soul divine born as a human being, that is to say, out of a physical mother, means that this

physicality too will be joined on to the divine status; the earthly life become the life divine here below.

The establishment of the dogma—whatever the manner and the apparent irrationality of it—now, not then or hereafter, is, we take it a significant happening. It is an indication perhaps of an occult demand that the time is ripe and that the promise of ages shall be made good now, that earth shall be made heaven and man the embodiment of the Divine erelong in the cycle we are passing through.

Savitri

BOOK TEN

THE BOOK OF THE DOUBLE TWILIGHT

CANTO ONE

THE DREAM TWILIGHT OF THE IDEAL

ALL still was darkness dread and desolate;
There was no change nor any hope of change.
In this black dream which was a house of Void,
A walk to Nowhere in a land of Nought,
Ever they drifted without aim or goal;
Gloom led to worse gloom, death to an emptier death,
In some positive Non-being's purposeless Vast
Through formless wastes dumb and unknowable.
An ineffectual beam of suffering light
Through the despairing darkness dogged their steps
Like the remembrance of a glory lost;
Even while it grew, it seemed unreal there,
Yet haunted Nihil's chill stupendous realm,
Unquenchable, perpetual, lonely, null,
A pallid ghost of dead eternity.
It was as if she must pay now her debt,
Her vain presumption to exist and think,
To some brilliant Maya that conceived her soul.
This most she must absolve with endless pangs,
Her deep original sin, the will to be
And the sin last, greatest, the spiritual pride,
That, made of dust, equalled itself with heaven,
Its scorn of the worm writhing in the mud,

Condemned ephemeral, born from Nature's dream,
Refusal of the transient creature's rôle,
The claim to be a living fire of God,
The will to be immortal and divine.
In that tremendous darkness heavy and bare
She atoned for all since the first act whence sprang
The error of the consciousness of Time,
The rending of the Inconscient's seal of sleep,
The primal and unpardoned revolt that broke
The peace and silence of the Nothingness
Which was before a seeming universe
Appeared in a vanity of imagined space
And life arose engendering grief and pain:
A great Negation was the Real's face
Prohibiting the vain process of Time:
And when there is no world, no creature more,
When Time's intrusion has been blotted out
It shall last, unbodied, saved from thought, at peace.
Accursed in what had been her godhead source,
Condemned to live for ever empty of bliss,
Her immortality her chastisement,
Her spirit, guilty of being, wandered doomed
Moving for ever through eternal Night.
But Maya is a veil of the Absolute;
A Truth occult has made this mighty world:
The Eternal's wisdom and self-knowledge act
In ignorant Mind and in the body's steps.
The Inconscient is the Superconscient's sleep.
An unintelligible Intelligence
Invents creation's paradox profound;
Spiritual thought is crammed in Matter's forms,
Unseen it throws out a dumb energy
And works a miracle by a machine.
All here is a mystery of contraries:
Darkness a magic of self-hidden light,
Suffering some secret rapture's tragic mask;
And death an instrument of perpetual life.
Although Death walks beside us on Life's road,

A dim bystander at the body's start
And a last judgment on man's futile works,
Other is the riddle of its ambiguous face:
Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth,
A grey defeat pregnant with victory,
A whip to lash us towards our deathless state.
The inconscient world is the spirit's self-made room,
Eternal Night shadow of eternal Day.
Night is not our beginning nor our end;
She is the dark Mother in whose womb we have hid
Safe from too swift a waking to world-pain.
We came to her from a supernal Light,
By Light we live and to the Light we go.
Here in this seat of Darkness mute and lone,
In the heart of everlasting Nothingness
Light conquered now even by that feeble beam:
Its faint infiltration drilled the blind deaf mass;
Almost it changed into a glimmering sight
That housed the phantom of an aureate Sun
Whose orb pupilled the eye of Nothingness.
A golden fire came in and burnt Night's heart;
Her dusky mindlessness began to dream;
The Inconscient conscious grew, Night felt and thought.
Assailed in the sovereign emptiness of its reign
The intolerant Darkness paled and drew apart
Till only a few black remnants stained that Ray.
But on a failing edge of dumb lost space
Still a greater dragon body sullenly loomed;
Adversary of the slow struggling Dawn
Defending its ground of tortured mystery,
It trailed its coils through the dead martyred air
And curving fled down a grey slope of Time.

There is a morning twilight of the gods;
Miraculous from sleep their forms arise
And God's long nights are justified by dawn.
There breaks a passion and splendour of new birth

And hue-winged visions stray across the lids,
The dreaming deities look beyond the seen
And fashion in their thoughts the ideal worlds
Sprung from a limitless moment of desire
That once had lodged in some abysmal heart.
Passed was the heaviness of the eyeless dark
And all the sorrow of the night was dead:
Surprised by a blind joy with groping hands
Like one who wakes to find his dreams were true,
Into a happy misty twilit world
Where all ran after light and joy and love
She slipped; there far-off raptures drew more close
And deep anticipations of delight
For ever eager to be grasped and held,
Were never grasped, yet breathed strange ecstasy.
A pearl-winged indistinctness fleeting swam,
An air that dared not suffer too much light.
Vague fields were there, vague pastures gleamed, vague trees,
Vague scenes dim-hearted in a drifting haze;
Vague cattle white roamed glimmering through the mist;
Vague spirits wandered with a bodiless cry,
Vague melodies touched the soul and fled pursued
Into harmonious distances unseized;
Forms subtly elusive and half-luminous powers
Wishing no goal for their unearthly course
Strayed happily through vague ideal lands
Or floated without footing or their walk
Left steps of reverie on sweet memory's ground;
Or they paced to the mighty measure of their thoughts
Led by a low far chanting of the gods.
A ripple of gleaming wings crossed the far sky;
Birds like pale-bosomed imaginations flew
With low disturbing voices of desire,
And half-heard lowings drew the listening ear,
As if the Sun-god's brilliant kine were there
Hidden in mist and passing towards the sun.
These fugitive beings, these elusive shapes
Were all that claimed the eye and met the soul,

The natural inhabitants of that world.
But nothing there was fixed or stayed for long;
No mortal feet could rest upon that soil,
No breath of life lingered embodied there.
In that fine chaos joy fled dancing past
And beauty evaded settled line and form
And hid its sense in mysteries of hue;
Yet gladness ever repeated the same notes
And gave the sense of an enduring world;
There was a strange consistency of shapes,
And the same thoughts were constant passers-by
And all renewed unendingly its charm
Alluring ever the expectant heart
Like music that one always waits to hear,
Like the recurrence of a haunting rhyme
One touched incessantly things never seized,
A skirt of worlds invisibly divine.
As if a trail of disappearing stars
There showered upon the floating atmosphere
Colours and lights and evanescent gleams
That called to follow into magic heaven,
And in each cry that fainted on the ear
There was the voice of an unrealised bliss.
An adoration reigned in the yearning heart,
A spirit of purity, an elusive presence
Of faery beauty and ungrasped delight
Whose momentary and escaping thrill,
However unsubstantial to our flesh,
And brief even in imperishableness,
Much sweeter seemed than any rapture known
Earth or all-conquering heaven can ever give.
Heaven ever young and earth too firm and old
Delay the heart by immobility:
Their raptures of creation last too long,
Their bold formations are too absolute;
Carved by an anguish of divine endeavour
They stand up sculptured on the eternal hills,
Or quarried from the living rocks of God

Win immortality by perfect form.
They are too intimate with eternal things:
Vessels of infinite significances,
They are too clear, too great, too meaningful;
No mist or shadow soothes the vanquished sight,
No soft penumbra of incertitude.
These only touch a golden hem of bliss,
The gleaming shoulder of some godlike hope,
The flying feet of exquisite desires.
On a slow trembling brink between night and day
They shone like visitants from the morning star,
Satisfied beginnings of perfection, first
Tremulous imaginings of a heavenly world:
They mingle in a passion of pursuit,
Thrilled with a spray of joy too slight to tire.
All in this world was shadowed forth, not limned,
Like faces leaping on a fan of fire
Or shapes of wonder in a tinted blur,
Like fugitive landscapes painting silver mists.
Here vision fled back from the sight alarmed,
And sound sought refuge from the ear's surprise,
And all experience was a hasty joy.
The joys here snatched were half-forbidden things,
Timorous soul-bridals delicately veiled
As when a goddess' bosom dimly moves
To first desire and her white soul transfigured,
A glimmering Eden crossed by fairy gleams,
Trembles to expectation's fiery wand,
But nothing is familiar yet with bliss.
All things in this fair realm were heavenly strange
In a fleeting gladness of untired delight,
In an insistency of magic change.
Past vanishing hedges, hurrying hints of fields,
Mid swift escaping lanes that fled her feet
Journeying she wished no end: as one through clouds
Travels upon a mountain ridge and hears
Arising to him out of hidden depths
Sound of invisible streams, she walked besieged

By the illusion of a mystic space,
A charm of bodiless touches felt and heard
A sweetness as of voices high and dim
Calling like travellers upon seeking winds
Melodiously with an alluring cry.
As if a music old yet ever new,
Moving suggestions on her heart-strings dwelt,
Thoughts that no habitation found, yet clung
With passionate repetition to her mind,
Desires that hurt not, happy only to live
Always the same and always unfulfilled
Sang in the breast like a celestial lyre.
Thus all could last yet nothing ever be.
In this beauty as of mind made visible,
Dressed in its rays of wonder Satyavan
Before her seemed the centre of its charm,
Head of her loveliness of longing dreams
And captain of the fancies of her soul.
Even the dreadful majesty of Death's face
And its sombre sadness could not darken nor stay
The intangible lustre of those fleeting skies.
The sombre Shadow sullen, implacable
Made beauty and laughter more imperative;
Enhanced by his grey joy grew more bright and dear;
His dark contrast edging ideal sight
Deepened unuttered meanings to the heart;
Pain grew a trembling undertone of bliss
And transience immortality's floating hem,
A moment's robe in which she looked more fair,
Its antithesis sharpening her divinity.
A comrade of the Ray and Mist and Flame
A moon-bright face, by a brilliant moment drawn,
Almost she seemed a thought mid floating thoughts,
Seen hardly by a visionary mind
Amid the white inward musings of the soul.
Half-vanquished by the dream happiness around
Awhile she moved on an enchantment's soil,
But still remained possessor of her soul.

Above, her spirit in its mighty trance
Saw all, but lived for its transcendent task,
Immutable like a fixed eternal star.

SRI AUROBINDO

THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES*

(*New Series*—2)

The Web of Yoga

TO be one in all ways of thy being with that which is the Highest, this is Yoga.

To be one in all ways of thy being with that which is the All, this is Yoga.

To be one in thy spirit and with thy understanding and thy heart and in all thy members with the God in humanity, this is Yoga.

To be one with all Nature and all beings, this is Yoga.

All this is to be one with God in his transcendence and his cosmos and all that he has created in his being. Because from him all is and all is in him and he is all and in all and because he is thy highest Self and thou art one with him in thy spirit and a portion of him in thy soul and at play with him in thy nature, and because this world is a scene in his being in which he is thy secret Master and lover and friend and the lord and sustainer of all thou art, therefore is oneness with him the perfect way of thy being.

The Evolutionary aim of Yoga

The human being on earth is God playing at humanity in a world of matter under the conditions of a hampered density with the ulterior intention of imposing law of spirit on matter and nature of deity upon human nature. Evolution is nothing but the progressive unfolding of Spirit out of the density of material consciousness and the gradual self-revelation of God out of this apparent animal being.

Yoga is the application, for this process of divine self-revelation, of the supreme force of tapas by which God created the world, supports it and will destroy it. It substitutes always some direct action of an infinite divine force for the limited workings of our fettered animal humanity. It uses divine means in order to rise to divinity.

* From the unpublished writings of Sri Aurobindo

All Yoga is tapasya and all siddhi of Yoga is accomplishment of godhead either by identity or by relation with the Divine Being—in its principles or its personality or in both—or simultaneously by identity and relation.

Identity is the principle of Adwaita, relation of Dwaita, relation in a qualified identity of Visishtadwaita. But entire perfection comes by identity with God in essential experience and relation of difference with Him in experience of manifestation.

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The Infinite Being in rest aware of its own eternal oneness. There is the everlasting silence of the Absolute.

The infinite Conscious Power in movement aware of its own eternal many-ness—the everlasting movement and creation of the Supreme.

As in the immobile ether arises, first sign of the creative impulse of Nature, vibration, Shabda, and this vibration is a line of etheric movement, is ether containing ether in its own field of mobile self-force and that primal stir is sufficient to initiate all forms and forces, even such is the original movement of the Infinite.

But this vibration is not the stir of any material force or substance and this contact is not material contact. This is a vibration of consciousness in spiritual essence; this is the contact of consciousness with itself in spiritual substance.

This original movement, not original or first in time, for it was from ever and continues for ever, but original in that action of consciousness which is an eternal repetition of all things in an eternal present, or, if you will, an eternal past-present-future, the three simultaneous times of that ever packed Time of the Infinite that translates our blind finite conception as the vast timelessness of the Absolute.

*
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Matter is but a form of consciousness; nevertheless solve not the object entirely into its subjectivity. Reject not the body of God, O God lover, but keep it for thy joy; for His body too is delightful even as His spirit.

Perishable and transitory delight is always the symbol of the eternal Ananda, revealed and rapidly concealed, which seeks by increasing recurrence to attach itself to some typal form of experience in material consciousness. When the particular form has been perfected to express God in the type, its delight will no longer be perishable, but an eternally recurrent possession of man and beings in matter manifest in their periods and often in their movements of felicity.

THE DIVINE PERSONALITY*

ONE question rises immediately in a synthetic Yoga which must not only comprise but unify knowledge and devotion, the difficult and troubling question of the divine Personality. All the trend of modern thought has been towards the belittling of personality; it has seen behind the complex facts of existence only a great impersonal force, an obscure becoming, and that too works itself out through impersonal forces and impersonal laws, while personality presents itself only as a subsequent, subordinate, partial, transient phenomenon upon the fact of this impersonal movement. Granting even to this Force a consciousness, that seems to be impersonal, indeterminate, void in essence of all but abstract qualities or energies; for everything else is only a result, a minor phenomenon. Ancient Indian thought starting from quite the other end of the scale arrived on most of its lines at the same generalisation. It conceived of an impersonal existence as the original and eternal truth; personality is only an illusion or at best a phenomenon of the mind.

On the other hand, the way of devotion is impossible if the personality of the Divine cannot be taken as a reality, a real reality and not a hypostasis of the illusion. There can be no love without a lover and beloved. If our personality is an illusion and the Personality to whom our adoration rises only a primary aspect of the illusion, and if we believe that, then love and adoration must at once be killed, or can only survive in the illogical passion of the heart denying by its strong beats of life the clear and dry truths of the reason. To love and adore a shadow of our minds or a bright cosmic phenomenon which vanishes from the eye of Truth, may be possible, but the way of salvation cannot be built upon a foundation of wilful self-deception. The bhakta indeed does not allow these doubts of the intellect to come in his way; he has the divinations of his heart, and these are to him sufficient. But the sadhaka of the Integral Yoga has to know the eternal and ultimate

**The Synthesis of Yoga,* Part II. (The Yoga of Devotion), Chapter V.

Truth and not to persist to the end in the delight of a Shadow. If the impersonal is the sole enduring truth, then a firm synthesis is impossible. He can at most take the divine personality as a symbol, a powerful and effective fiction, but he will have in the end to overpass it and to abandon devotion for the sole pursuit of the ultimate knowledge. He will have to empty being of all its symbols, values, contents in order to arrive at the featureless Reality.

We have said, however, that personality and impersonality, as our minds understand them, are only aspects of the Divine and both are contained in his being; they are one thing which we see from two opposite sides and into which we enter by two gates. We have to see this more clearly in order to rid ourselves of any doubts with which the intellect may seek to afflict us as we follow the impulse of devotion and the intuition of love or to pursue us into the joy of the divine union. They fall away indeed from that joy, but if we are too heavily weighted with the philosophical mind, they may follow us almost up to its threshold. It is well therefore to discharge ourselves of them as early as may be by perceiving the limits of the intellect, the rational philosophic mind, in its peculiar way of approaching the truth and the limits even of the spiritual experience which sets out from the approach through the intellect, to see that it need not be the whole integrality of the highest and widest spiritual experience. Spiritual intuition is always a more luminous guide than the discriminating reason, and spiritual intuition addresses itself to us not only through the reason, but through the rest of our being as well, through the heart and the life also. The integral knowledge will then be that which takes account of all and unifies their diverse truths. The intellect itself will be more deeply satisfied if it does not confine itself to its own data, but accepts truth of the heart and the life also and give to them their absolute spiritual value.

The nature of the philosophical intellect is to move among ideas and to give them a sort of abstract reality of their own apart from all their concrete representations which affect our life and personal consciousness. Its bent is to reduce these representations to their barest and most general terms and to subtilise even these if possible into some final abstraction. The pure intellectual direction travels away from life. In judging things it tries to get back from their effects on our personality and to arrive at whatever general and impersonal truth may be behind them; it is inclined to treat that kind of truth as the only real truth of being or at least as the one superior and permanent power of reality. Therefore it is bound by its own

nature to end in its extremes at an absolute impersonality and an absolute abstraction. This is where the ancient philosophies ended. They reduced everything to three abstractions, existence, consciousness and bliss of being, and they tended to get rid of the two of these three which seemed dependent on the first and most abstract, and to throw all back into a pure featureless existence from which everything else had been discharged, all representations, all values, except the one infinite and timeless fact of being. But the intellect had still one farther possible step to take and it took it in Buddhistic philosophy. It found that even this final fact of existence was only a representation; it abstracted that also and got to an infinite zero which might be either a void or an eternal inexpressible.

The heart and life, as we know, have an exactly opposite law. They cannot live with abstractions; they can find their satisfaction only in things that are concrete or can be made seizable; whether physically, mentally or spritually, their object is not something which they seek to discriminate and arrive at by intellectual abstraction; a living becoming of it or a conscious possession and joy of their object is what they seek. Nor is it the satisfaction of an abstract mind or impersonal existence to which they respond, but the joy and the activity of a being, a conscious Person in us, whether finite or infinite, to whom the delights and powers of his existence are a reality. Therefore when the heart and life turn towards the Highest and the Infinite, they arrive not at an abstract existence or non-existence, a Sat or else a Nirvana, but at an existent, a Sat Purusha, not merely at a consciousness, but at a conscious Being, a Chaitanya Purusha, not merely at a purely impersonal delight of the Is, but at an infinite I Am of bliss, an Anandamaya Purusha; nor can they immerge and lose his consciousness and bliss in featureless existence, but must insist on all three in one, for delight of existence is their highest power and without consciousness delight cannot be possessed. That is the sense of the supreme figure of the intensest Indian religion of love, Sri Krishna, the All-blissful and All-beautiful.

The intelligence can also follow this trend, but it ceases then to be the pure intellect; it calls in its power of imagination to its aid, it becomes the image-maker, the creator of symbols and values, a spiritual artist and poet. Therefore the severest intellectual philosophy admits the Saguna, the divine Person, only as the supreme cosmic symbol; go beyond it to reality and you will arrive, it says, at last to the Nirguna, the pure Impersonal. The rival philosophy asserts the superiority of the Saguna; that which is impersonal is, it will perhaps say, only the material, the stuff of his spiritual nature out

of which he manifests the powers of his being, consciousness and bliss, all that expresses him; the impersonal is the apparent negative out of which he looses the temporal variations of his eternal postive of personality. There are evidently here two instincts, or, if we hesitate to apply that word to the intellect, two innate powers of our being which are dealing each in its own manner with the same Reality.

Both the ideas of the intellect, its discriminations, and the aspirations of the heart and life, their approximations have behind them realities at which they are the means of arriving. Both are justified by spiritual experience; both arrive at the divine absolute of that which they are seeking. But still each tends, if too exclusively indulged, to be hampered by the limitations of its innate quality and its characteristic means. We see that in our earthly living where the heart and life followed exclusively failed to lead to any luminous issue, while an exclusive intellectuality becomes either remote, abstract and impotent or a sterile critic or dry mechanist. Their sufficient harmony and just reconciliation is one of the great problems of our psychology and our action.

The reconciling power lies beyond in the intuition. But there is an intuition which serves the intellect and an intuition which serves the heart and the life, and if we follow either of these exclusively, we shall not get much farther than before; we shall only make more intimately real to us, but still separately, the things at which the other and less seeing powers are aiming. But the fact that it can lend itself impartially to all parts of our being,—for even the body has its intuitions,—shows that the intuition is not exclusive, but an integral truth-finder. We have to question the intuition of our whole being, not only separately in each part of it, nor in a sum of their findings, but beyond all these lower instruments, beyond even their first spiritual correspondents, by rising into the native home of the intuition which is the native home of the infinite and illimitable Truth, *ṛtasya sve dame*, where all existence discovers its unity. That is what the ancient Veda meant when it cried, "There is a firm truth hidden by truth (the eternal truth concealed by this other of which we have here these lower intuitions); there the ten hundred rays of light stand together; that is One." "*ṛtena ṛtam apihitam dhruvam...daśa śata saha tasthatus, tad ekam.*"

The spiritual intuition lays hold always upon the reality; it is the luminous harbinger of spiritual realisation or else its illuminative light; it sees that which the other powers of our being are labouring to explore; it gets at the firm truth of the abstract representations of the intellect and the phenomenal

representations of the heart and life, a truth which is itself neither remotely abstract nor outwardly concrete, but something else for which these are only two sides of its psychological manifestation to us. What the intuition of our integral being perceives, when its members no longer dispute among themselves but are illumined from above, is that the whole of our being aims at the one reality. The impersonal is a truth, the personal too is a truth; they are the same truth seen from two sides of our psychological activity; neither by itself gives the total account of the Reality, and yet by either we can approach it.

Looked at from one side, it would seem as if an impersonal Thought were at work and created the fiction of the thinker for the convenience of its action, an impersonal Power at work creating the fiction of the doer, an impersonal existence in operation which uses the fiction of a personal being who has a conscious personality and a personal delight. Looked at from the other side, it is the thinker who expresses himself in thought which without him could not exist and our general notion of thought symbolises simply the power of the nature of the thinker; the Ishwara expresses himself by will and power and force; the Existent extends himself in all the forms integral and partial, direct, inverse and perverse of his existence, consciousness and bliss, and our abstract general notion of these things is only an intellectual representation of the triple power of his nature of being. All impersonality seems in its turn to become a fiction and existence in its every moment and its every particle nothing but the life, the consciousness, the power, the delight of the one and yet innumerable Personality, the infinite Godhead, the self-aware and self-unfolding Purusha. Both views are true, except that the idea of fiction, which is borrowed from our own intellectual processes, has to be exiled and each must be given its proper validity. The integral seeker has to see in this light that he can reach one and the same Reality on both lines, either successively or simultaneously, as if on two connected wheels travelling on parallel lines, but parallel lines which in definance of intellectual logic but in obedience to their own inner truth of unity do meet in infinity.

We have to look at the divine Personality from this standpoint. When we speak of personality, we mean by it at first something limited, external and separative, and our idea of a personal God assumes the same imperfect character. Our personality is to us at first a separate creature, a limited mind, body, character which we conceive of as the person we are, a fixed quantity; for although in reality it is always changing, yet there is a suffi-

cient element of stability to give a kind of practical justification to this notion of fixedness. We conceive of God as such a person, only without body, a separate person different from all others with a mind and character limited by certain qualities. At first in our primitive conceptions this deity is a thing of much inconstancy, freak and caprice, an enlarged edition of our human character; but afterwards we conceive of the divine nature of personality as a quite fixed quantity and we attribute to it those qualities alone which we regard as divine and ideal, while all the others are eliminated. This limitation, compels us to account for all the rest by attributing them to a Devil, or by lending to man an original creative capacity for all that we consider evil, or else, when we perceive that this will not quite do, by erecting a power which we call Nature and attributing to that all the lower quality and mass of action for which we do not wish to make the Divine responsible. At a higher pitch the attribution of mind and character to God becomes less anthropomorphic and we regard him as an infinite Spirit, but still a separate person, a spirit with certain fixed divine qualities as his attributes. So are conceived the ideas of the divine Personality, the personal God which vary so much in various religions.

All this may seem at first sight to be an original anthropomorphism terminating in an intellectual notion of the Deity which is very much at variance with the actualities of the world as we see it. It is not surprising that the philosophical and sceptical mind should have found little difficulty in destroying it all intellectually, whether in the direction of the denial of a personal God and the assertion of an impersonal Force or Becoming or in that of an impersonal Being or an ineffable denial of existence with all the rest as only symbols of Maya or phenomenal truths of the Time-consciousness. But these are only the personifications of monotheism. Polytheistic religions, less exalted perhaps, but wider and more sensitive in their response to cosmic life, have felt that all in the cosmos has a divine origin; therefore they conceived of the existence of many divine personalities with a vague sense of an indefinable Divine behind, whose relations with the personal gods were not very clearly conceived. And in their more exoteric forms these gods were crudely anthropomorphic; but where the inner sense of spiritual things became clearer, the various godheads assumed the appearance of personalities of the one Divine,—that is the declared point of view of the ancient Veda. This Divine might be a supreme Being who manifests himself in various divine personalities or an impersonal existence which meets the human mind in these forms; or both views might

be held simultaneously without any intellectual attempt to reconcile them, since both were felt to be true to spiritual experience.

If we subject these notions of the divine Personality to the discrimination of the intellect, we shall be inclined to reduce them, according to our bent, to fictions of the imagination or to psychological symbols, in any case, the response of our sensitive personality to something which is not this at all, but is purely impersonal. We may say that That is in reality the very opposite of our humanity and our personality and therefore in order to enter into relations with it we are impelled to set up these human fictions and these personal symbols so as to make it nearer to us. But we have to judge by spiritual experience, and in a total spiritual experience we shall find that these things are not fictions and symbols, but truths of divine being in their essence, however imperfect may have been our representations of them. Even our first idea of our own personality is not an absolute error, but only an incomplete and superficial view beset by many mental errors. Greater self-knowledge shows us that we are not fundamentally the particular formulation of form, powers, properties, qualities with a conscious I identifying itself with them, which we at first appear to be. That is only a temporary fact, though still a fact, of our partial being on the surface of our active consciousness. We find within an infinite being with the potentiality of all qualities, of infinite quality, *anantaguṇa*, which can be combined in any number of possible ways, and each combination is a revelation of our being. For all this personality is the self-manifestation of a Person, that is to say, of a being who is conscious of his manifestation.

But we see to that this being does not seem to be composed even of infinite quality, but has a status of his complex reality in which he seems to stand back from it and to become an indefinable conscious existence, *anirdeśyam*. Even consciousness seems to be drawn back and leave merely a timeless pure existence. And again even this pure self of our being seems at a certain pitch to deny its own reality, or to be a projection from a selfless* baseless unknowable, which we may conceive of either as a nameless somewhat or as a Nihil. It is when we would fix upon this exclusively and forget all that it has withdrawn into itself that we speak of pure impersonality or the void Nihil as the highest truth. But a more integral vision shows us that it is the Person and the personality and all that it had manifested which has thus cast itself upward into its own unexpressed

[1] *Anātmyam anilayanam.* Taittiriya Upanishad.

absolute. And if we carry up our heart as well as our reasoning mind to the Highest, we shall find that we can reach it through the absolute Person as well as through an absolute impersonality. But all this self-knowledge is only the type within ourselves of the corresponding truth of the Divine in his universality. There too we meet him in various forms of divine personality; in formulations of quality which variously express him to us in his nature; in infinite quality, the Anantaguna; in the divine Person who expresses himself through infinite quality; in absolute impersonality, an absolute existence or an absolute non-existence, which is yet all the time the unexpressed Absolute of this divine Person, this conscious Being who manifests himself through us and through the universe.

Even on the cosmic plane we are constantly approaching the Divine on either of these sides. We may think, feel and say that God is Truth, Justice, Righteousness, Power, Love, Delight, Beauty; we may see him as a universal force or as a universal consciousness. But this is only the abstract way of experience. As we ourselves are not merely a number of qualities or powers or a psychological quantity, but a being, a person who so expresses his nature, so is the Divine a Person, a conscious Being who thus expresses his nature to us. And we can adore him through different forms of this nature, a God of righteousness, a God of love and mercy, a God of peace and purity; but it is evident that there are other things in the divine nature which we have put outside the form of personality in which we are thus worshipping him. The courage of an unflinching spiritual vision and experience can meet him also in more severe or in terrible forms. None of these are all the Divinity; yet these forms of his personality are real truths of himself in which he meets us and seems to deal with us, as if the rest had been put away behind him. He is each separately and all altogether. He is Vishnu, Krishna, Kali; he reveals himself to us in humanity as the Christ personality or the Buddha personality. When we look beyond our first exclusively concentrated vision, we see behind Vishnu all the personality of Shiva and behind Shiva all the personality of Vishnu. He is the Ananta-guna, infinite quality and the infinite divine Personality which manifests itself through it. Again, he seems to withdraw into a pure spiritual impersonality or beyond all idea even of impersonal Self and to justify a spiritualised atheism or agnosticism; he becomes to the mind of man an indefinable, *anirdeśyam*. But out of this unknowable the conscious Being, the divine Person, who has manifested himself here, still speaks, "This too is I; even here beyond the view of mind, I am He, the Purushottama."

For, beyond the divisions and contradictions of the intellect there is another light and there the vision of a truth reveals itself which we may thus try to express to ourselves intellectually. There all is one truth of all these truths; for there each is present and justified in all the rest. In that light our spiritual experience becomes united and integralised; no least hair's breadth of real division is left, no shade of superiority and inferiority remains between the seeking of the Impersonal and the adoration of the divine Personality, between the way of knowledge and the way of devotion.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF PERSONALITY*

IV

IT has been seen that the Divine Nature,—that which the ancients termed Sachchidananda—in working secretly and inwardly through the appearance of the world, is really striving to manifest Itself ultimately in the very nature and substance of that which seems to oppose and contradict its own essential Perfection. And furthermore, that within this movement the ego has become an intermediary stage towards the final emergence of the fully perfected Gnostic Being, who is the only effective instrument of this ultimate world Perfection. But it is clear that the primary need of this highest emergence is a spiritual knowledge through which a wider Consciousness can eventually be attained. Let us therefore examine more closely the steps which constitute the natural basis of this higher development.

In the past, by an advancing power of Reason, man had been able to deduce facts beyond the range of his inherited sense-bound awareness. Here we see that Reason acting independently of sensory experience had sought to discover the objective and absolute truths of the world—that is, a reality which exists outside and apart from the nature of man. By this endeavour metaphysical thought had been able to proceed beyond the point where experimental science could as yet go. But even the acquisition of metaphysical knowledge, although it satisfies the quest of Reason, is essentially an abstract knowledge removed from the reality of the world around, and does not embrace the integral Truth. A complete knowledge must eventually bring down the higher truths. And in addition it is necessary that these ideals be converted into facts, and that facts be translated into acts, if they are to become real and utilisable values. But since these highest ideals merge into spheres beyond our present sensory perception, we must

* Based on *The Life Divine*

conclude that it is first necessary to expand our own psychological outlook, and develop more plastic faculties, in order to bring such supraphysical concepts within the realm of actual experience.

It is by the faculty of Reason that man has been able to raise himself effectively above the merely instinctive level of the animal world. Whereas below man the senses are the chief channel or means of communication between the great Life urge and the animal's activity, in man the senses have become co-ordinated by the development of a sense-mind, which translates sensory impressions into mental concepts. Thus animal awareness is merged into and motivated by the large underlying life-consciousness of which the individual organism is a part. Man, on the other hand, in becoming separated from this direct and common reservoir of knowing, has himself developed a self-contained consciousness, organised by the sense-mind. It is this separation from the broad primary mother-consciousness that has produced in man an indirect or secondary means of knowing, centred on the dividing self-conscious nature of the ego; only when man can rise above the narrow confines of his self-centred ego does he become aware of larger spheres of Consciousness—cosmic as well as supra-cosmic—which open him to a more direct realisation of the totality. Below him man sees the broad instinctive stream of the life-force, by which the activity of the organism is guided and controlled, and above him there is the vast sea of a universal consciousness in which the individual can himself partake of wider and more comprehensive vistas of knowing,—if he is willing to forsake his narrow ego-view of the world. The separative organisation of mind is thus an intermediary phase of developemnt between the instinctive urge of life and an enlightened cosmic consciousness. Compared with the separative nature of man's present outlook, these two modes of Consciousness, above and below, are a direct means of action or knowing in which there is no division between the acting being and the act, or as in the higher consciousness, between the knower and the known. It is what we can aptly call a knowledge by identity, and is in fact the fundamental substratum and process of all knowing. In the super-consciousness, however, the action springs directly from the individual's own awareness, whereas in the animal sub-consciousness the action is instigated by an urge of which it is not itself conscious.

Although the sense-mind ordinarily utilises the senses as its channel of communication to become aware of and make contact with the outer world, it can also act independently of the senses and know directly something of

the inner as well as the outer nature of things. Such phenomena as telepathy and clairvoyance, which are largely pushed aside by that part of us which fears an expansion of our present faculties of awareness, indicate clearly the inherent plastic nature of mind. These phenomena in fact, cannot be explained unless we see that it is because the physical senses are quieted or subdued—as in sleep or trance or hypnosis—that inner and more subtle faculties of the mind are able to emerge, which can extend beyond the material field of reality. Yet although sleep and trance are usually our first gateways to other spheres of awareness, it is in the waking consciousness that these more subtle avenues of knowing have to be cultivated, in order to become normal functions coincident with our ordinary outlook. But it must also be noted that clairvoyance and telepathy are themselves primary indications of the occult working of the sense-mind. They lead us into the subliminal zones of man and the universe, but since they are after all bounded by the Cosmic Reality they cannot seize the higher supra-cosmic truths beyond the subliminal. It is here that Reason, acting in its own free state, independently of all sensory data, can first lead us in its incessant search for the Absolute or fundamental Ground of existence to realise those transcendent truths. In this respect it is important to note also that mere belief in the magical and the miraculous is not synonymous with belief in the existence of the true supernature. Whereas the former is not open to the scrutiny of Reason it is only when the reasoning power begins to probe and investigate occult knowledge, ruthlessly sweeping away all superstitions, illusions and false beliefs that the latter can clearly be defined. The way is thus cleared for the intuitive mind to bring the true illumination, which lights up the occult zones in their natural relation with both our surface consciousness and the supracosmic truths. For while seeing into and through the occult truths, intuition also stands above and detached from them, and grasps the entirety in a larger perspective. By this we see that Reason's principal function is to act as the mediator between the subconscient level of the instinctive life and the superconscient sphere of intuitive action, which is the higher aim of man.

It was this attitude of approach to knowledge—the development of Intuition—which characterised the endeavour of the ancient Vedantic Seers. Although utilising Reason for a preliminary opening to Truth, they realised that it is beyond mind and the concepts of Reason that the pure Transcendent truths really exist,—that which they called the world of Light as opposed to our world of ignorance and darkness. Thus they

discovered the way by which the fixed and interminable circling of mind could be transcended and broken; the mind's cyclic tendency being converted into an upward spiral movement. All knowledge was based on the fundamental realisation that the innermost self of man is identical with the transcendent Nature of the Self beyond, (so that the very term Self came to mean this Transcendent Reality of which the individual is the self-sameness.). It was then the chief pursuit of the ancient Seers to discover the secret and hidden links between man and that superconscient Light above. Herein lies the importance of the original Vedanta in forming the fundamental basis of modern thought, for even while reaching to the Heights it had retained its hold on the innermost reality of man—his soul being.

In becoming the self-conscious individual with a developed power of Reason, man had certainly surpassed the blind instinctive animal level of awareness, but in so doing he had forfeited a direct way of knowing for a fragmentary and indirect one. It is therefore towards a more self-aware identification with the larger Consciousness that man's efforts must now be directed. And this means the development of the intuitive faculty, on which all spiritual knowledge is necessarily based. For it is intuitive knowledge which brings us into a direct and unified relation with that which we ordinarily regard as other-than-self. We can see how modern thought has already begun to grapple with the problem of intuition, though modern man is not yet fully aware that it is intuition he is really groping for. In literature and the creative arts for example, where the subjective element naturally predominates, there is the effort of the modernists to combine a sensitive feeling into things with a detachment that can at the same time grasp their wholeness. It is the endeavour to penetrate to the innermost reality without loosing the perspective of the entirety. In the contemporary efforts however, the detachment and the sympathetic feeling have not succeeded in becoming one single and spontaneous expression. By their separation the impersonal quality of detachment has drifted into callous indifference and unconcern, while what should be sympathetic insight has become submerged in the lower levels of consciousnes, from which it is unable to free itself. It is only Intuition which can give the true enlightenment, the insight which comprehends without becoming helplessly entangled in the inward vision. And it is only when our actions spring directly from this higher faculty that the intuitive consciousness can be said to be established as a permanent factor in man.

In the past there had certainly been intermittent flashes of Intuition, but only rarely was there the steady sustained insight which marks the established working of the intuitive faculty,—as it appeared in the saints, seers, prophets and men of God. It is particularly in the world's scriptural revelations therefore, that we can find the richest source of an intuitive vision. It is from such records that we learn of a Transcendent Reality—the pure Existent beyond existence—which confirms and explains one's own deepest experience of a timelessness beyond the widest comprehension of mind. It is an experience beyond Reason, which is firmly rooted to the phenomenal existence and cannot, like Intuition with its wider range of awareness, wholly seize that higher Truth. It was thus through the intuitive avenues of thought that the ancient Seers sought to reveal the secret connection between man and the universe, and between man and that Transcendent Existent on which both the universe and man depend. Tersely they summed their findings in three succinct formulae. Firstly, by the expression "I am He", they indicated the self-realisation of the individual's essential oneness with that Transcendent Beyond. Secondly by "Thou art That", each and every individual was realised to be essentially constituted of that transcendent Self,—the pure Divine Nature as the central essence of all things. Thirdly by "All this is Brahman", the all-embracing truth that the Whole as well as the constituent parts were seen to be the very existence of that sole-existent Reality. So not only is each and every individual entity inseparably connected with the Supreme, but also each is joined to the other by that all-pervading Presence, in an intimate relation and oneness of being. Thus is the individual, in his activity in the world, intricately connected with the collectivity; and without the mutual interchange between them neither the collectivity nor the individual can progress and expand into a truly universal existence.

It is interesting to see the part that Intuition has actually played in the history of human thought, particularly in moulding the basic pattern and directing the chief trend of its progress. At crucial moments, whether in the leadership of a nation, in scientific discovery or in the creative arts, it is always the flash of inspiration that is the nucleus of a new vision, a new orientation or a new impetus in human progress. It is only later that the the intellect comes in to build up its own citadel of thought or idea around this intuitive light-seed. We can see this process more clearly in the growth of the older civilisations, notably in India where spiritual thought and endeavour, which depend largely on the intuitive faculty, had always been the

principal pursuit. The dawn of these ancient cultures was invariably marked by the appearance of a direct intuitive revelation—either of an occult or of a spiritual nature—which became the nucleus of its future beliefs and activity. This was the age of the Gods and the Heroes, the myths and the grand epics of man. The dawn of Indian culture was thus the age of the Vedas, with its rich store of symbol and its inspired vision of Truth. It was a revelation necessarily comprehended by the few of those early times, and thus they were obliged to express their vision through the uttered word and the known symbolical image natural to the life of the time. Here it was the rhythm of poetical expression which best conveyed that lofty vision into a comprehensible image and symbol without losing the true inner spirit. The translation of the Vedic symbol into a more precise expression but at the same time retaining the original intuitive truths, marked the beginning of the Vedantic period—with the appearance of the earliest Upanishads. This was the age of instruction rather than of symbolical ritual, when actual experience of the sought Truth was transmitted directly from Master or Sage to pupil or disciple. It was natural however, that as this knowledge spread outwards it should become more diffused, and that the certitude of its spiritual truths should become scattered into speculative deliberation. The transmission of direct experience thus gave way to hair-splitting argument, and argument to diverse schools of belief. This was the period of metaphysical thought, when attempts were being made to formulate the ancient revelations into clear-cut summarised patterns and into cohesive and logical inrepretations. Thus arose the many schools of Indian philosophy each claiming to give the correct interpretation of Vedanta, but each in fact presenting merely a partial and fragmented aspect of that integral Truth. They served however, as steps or gateways by which these wider universal truths could be comprehended—by the many rather than by the few. Unfortunately in the medieval years of sectarian development, the unity of the higher truths was lost in the divided channels of a many-branching system. That was a time of narrow sectarianism, when the composite religion we know of today as Hinduism began to form its characteristic pattern of separative development. A somewhat similar trend of events can be seen in the growth of western religion and other world faiths. Thus we cannot regard Hinduism as an equivalent term of reference for the ancient scriptures of Veda and Vedanta; just in the same way that we cannot regard present-day Christianity as being synonymous with the living example of Christ's life (whose actual words,

being mostly lost to us, only an indirect record of the real spiritual teachings unfortunately remains)*. Thus even as other world faiths have lost the originating spirit of their Founders in spreading their message into the world so Hinduism, in its enclosed phase, became a fossilised agglomeration of sects which largely obscured, while at the same time sheltering, the original intuitive utterances of the ancients. But is this modern age which has already swept aside its age-long superstitions and false beliefs, it is only direct truths and living experiences that can be truly accepted as the basis of a broader world outlook. It is in this respect that the original teachings of Vedanta come to form the widest foundation for new and vaster heights of attainment.

In regarding separately the respective developments of religion and philosophy, (though their actual relationship has always been a combined and interdependent one), one can see how each has served in its own way towards the cultural uplift of mankind. Broadly speaking, we find that whereas philosophy has served mainly as a stage in the ascending progression of humanity, religion has tended to form the descending complement of a cyclic movement. Thus philosophy has attempted to open up the mind to the highest truths, values and principles, while religion originating directly from a ray of God-given Light has tended to spread its revelations outwards until it has permeated all levels of life. Succsssive descents of the Divine Grace have been the seeds from which the world's religions have sprung. By their descents man has been progressively enlightened,—raising him to the realisation of an infinite Reality beyond all mundane conception, and instigating in him the greater endeavour to realise those ideals. But religious movements, which sooner or later have become bereft of their spiritual origins, can be said to have delivered their message and fulfilled their purpose in the world. Yet men have continued to cling to an empty shell of dogma and organised ritual, in spite of the fact that the inner spirit has already fled into more dynamic forms of aspiration. But although the broad outward developments of religion and philosophy tend to form a cyclic movement, we find that there is also an alternating rhythm within each such that in philosophy the ascent of the individual towards those inspired ideals turns to a descent through the collectivity.

*This is to say that Christ's real spiritual work and influence was a significant achievement for a previous stage in man's development, and not so much for these present times, except as a great historical factor in the traditional culture of western man.

And conversely the descent of spiritual Light through the broad mass of humanity, inspires the individual ascent to regain those Heights, and actualise a yet greater realisation of the Divine Reality in the world. Thus philosophy utilises the highest ideals of religious expression as its own peaks of attainment, while religion utilises the intellectual permeation of these spiritual truths for inspiring the multitude towards its own particular way and aspect of the Divine. As an intellectual force therefore, philosophy attempts to awaken the individual to a comprehension of the highest ideals of human conception, and as an emotional factor religion has tended to light up a collective aspiration towards its own particular revelation of the Divine. In this way religion and philosophy have conjoined in the quest and realisation of higher truths.

There are two factors however, which break into what would otherwise be an interminable cyclic movement around a fixed point,—as the mind of man of itself is wont to turn in a lifeless mechanical circling. One is the descent of Grace, through which God has successively given—in accordance with man's readiness—something of His own Divine Nature to the world; and the other is the individual ascent which attains an actual self-realisation of the Transcendent Beyond. Thus has a fixed clyce been converted into an ascending spiral, which is the basic pattern and hall-mark of all spiritual endeavour. Religion has thus been the channel for a renewal or rebirth—a Descent from the Supreme,—while philosophy has been the chief instrument in stirring the individual quest to reach the higher truths revealed to man. In this way the divine Light has come to build up a growing spiritual knowledge in the world. And it is this knowledge which constitutes the most potent factor and direct opening through which modern thought can free itself from the tangle in which it is at present enmeshed.

When we consider man's present outlook, we see that Reason in becoming the all-dominant and fundamental principle of knowledge has irreverently swept away the central factor of revelation together with the beliefs which had sprung from it. Faith, belief and intuition have all had to give way to a purely rational system of thought. But sooner or later man must discover that what he has omitted,—namely, Intuition or soul-vision—is the very faculty by which the wholeness of things, at present seemingly disconnected, can indeed be grasped and the Unity perceived in them. By this avenue we begin to enquire what the true relation is between man and the multiple complex movement of the world, of which

man is inescapably a part. And above all the secret connection between this whole existence and that supreme and absolute Unity beyond, which appears as the pure Existent standing immutably behind the entire cosmic existence. Out of this enquiry springs the question of how the constricting ego-centre which has come to form the present circumscribed orbit of man's world, can be opened to the true spiritual personality—the real Self of man's being which is the essence of the Self-nature of the Divine. For we then realise that the infinite Existent which appears at first to be so infinitely remote, is yet intimately connected with the innermost centre of man's soul. These are the problems yet to be considered. And in this endeavour we must scrupulously take account of the light which the ancient pathfinders have already thrown on this path.

NATHANIEL PEARSON

THE STORY OF PHILOSOPHY*

(*From Kant to Sri Aurobindo*)

PERIODICALLY, in the history of thought, philosophers have found it necessary to stop thinking about Truth, Reality, the Universe or whatever their subject-matter is taken to be and have compelled philosophy to turn round on itself and become critical of its own aims and methods. This particularly happens when progress in philosophy for some reason is barred and there is a danger of the philosophical energy being frittered away either in merely destructive criticism or in barren speculation. The need is then felt for a new method or at least restatement of the true philosophical method in order that philosophy may be rescued from its impasse and, to use the words of Kant, "placed once again on the sure path of progress".

Socrates was the first philosopher who made philosophy reflect on its own presuppositions. In modern times philosophy once again became self-critical in the hands of Descartes. After Descartes Empiricism culminating in the philosophy of Hume had brought philosophy to the verge of total scepticism. Kant affirmed that Hume had awakened him from his dogmatic slumber and regarded it as his main task therefore to reconstruct philosophy so as to place it on the sure path of science.

The essence of Hume's scepticism was that causal connections in Nature which are presupposed by science are subjective and therefore fictitious. Kant proceeded to answer this scepticism by distinguishing between the world of phenomena, i.e., things as they are known by us and the world of noumena, i.e., things in themselves, and showing that causal connections are real and objective in the world of phenomena because the notion of cause is such that experience itself would not be possible unless we presuppose causal connections between things. To put it popularly, if the mind finds something to be necessary then it must necessarily be true of things within its experience. Kant expressed this truth in his well-known epigram "under-

* A Broadcast Talk published with the permission of All-India Radio, Bombay

standing makes nature". But for Kant the mind's authority and jurisdiction do not extend beyond phenomena to the realm of things in themselves. The mind's categories are no guide whatever in determining the nature of this supersensible reality. It would seem then that Kant is an agnostic concerning such ultimate conceptions as God, Freedom and Immortality. But this is not so. Corresponding to the distinction between the world of phenomena and the world of things in themselves, Kant makes a distinction between the theoretical and the practical reason. Theoretical reason, for instance, can neither prove nor disprove the existence of God and so what Kant calls transcendent metaphysics, i.e., metaphysics of the supersensible is impossible. But what pure resson is unable to do is accomplished easily enough by practical reason which is the reason connected with our moral and practical nature. God exists, because His existence is a postulate of our moral nature. Thus Kant seems to assert the primacy of the practical over the pure reason.

The dualism in Kant's philosophy established the alternative lines of development for subsequent philosophers. The choice was between the high metaphysical road leading through the extension of the authority of the theoretic reason to the all-embracing and timeless Absolute and the low empirical road pointed out to some by the practical reason leading to a changing human and imperfect world in which the sober pronouncements of science carry greater weight than the airy speculations of metaphysics. The two tendencies were towards rationalism and absolutism on the one hand, and on the other, towards anti-intellectualism expressing itself in favour of the Will or of the Intuition as against reason, Positivism and Humanism which extol respectively the importance of scientific knowledge and human interest.

Hegel took the high road by rejecting Kant's notion of the thing-in-itself. The real world is also open to the gaze of thought in its highest form as Reason, because the Real, says Hegel, is the rational. The cardinal principle of what Hegel himself calls his Absolute Idealsim is that "Truth is the whole". Thought as Understanding sets up antagonisms between spirit and nature, freedom and necessity, unity and diversity, and even falls into irremediable contradictions. While thought as Reason heals all breaches and overcomes all oppositions through the progressive application of the dialectical method, culminating in the high vision of the Absolute Mind or Idea. All things, including nature and mind and the process of history are viewed by Hegel as the self evolution of the Absolute Mind

which is not indifferent and aloof but lives in its manifestations. Thus Hegel's system is the first serious attempt in modern times at a universal philosophy which seeks to justify the ways of the Infinite to the finite.

This opinion was not shared by the pessimist thinker Schopenhauer who dismissed Hegelianism as "this sickening humbug", and proclaimed himself "Kant's true successor". Schopenhauer, as against Hegel, takes the high road to the Absolute through the practical reason, which, he identifies with the Will. The Will in man is something more primitive and foundational than the intellect and it is also the ultimate cause of all things. Thus the chasm between the subjective and the transcendent worlds is once more bridged. Schopenhauer showed greater insight than Hegel in recognising that the Will is a deeper reality in us than the intellect, but unfortunately, in spite of his deep admiration for the Upanishadas, he identifies consciousness with the mind and so perforce regards the Will-to-life as a blind unconscious force working without method and aim, and the conclusion he draws is that the world being a product of blindness is not the best but the worst of all possible worlds. Man's life is nasty, brutish and short. True wisdom therefore consists in the negative ideal of the denial of the Will-to-life, through a holy resignation which results in "unbroken peace and the greatest delight in death".

It was the atheism of the great ascetic and renouncer of life that attracted Nietzsche, the upholder of the Will-to-power, who preached the gospel of the Superman and strength and hardness as the path thereto. These two philosophers had little else in common save atheism. Nietzsche was a fighter, filled with a joyous spirit, that looked upwards and forwards with triumph and dominion in his eyes. Schopenhauer regarded individuality as an evil to be wiped out in the nirvana of the Will. Nietzsche, on the other hand, revelled in a sense of superiority and difference from the common herd. "The superman", says Nietzsche, "is the meaning of the earth", "let your will say the superrman shall be the meaning of the earth". But Nietzsche, the materialist, does not and perhaps cannot tell us, what is the meaning and end of the superman. "God is dead," says his Zarathustra, and so the superman too is to be born for no more glorious end than death. In the universal sea of blind forces he is perhaps a bigger and a noisier bubble than the common herd but equally doomed to final extinction.

A very different turn is given to Voluntarism or the philosophy of

the Will in the pragmatism of William James and John Dewey which arose as a revolt against the Absolutism of Hegel and his English successors. For James, the practical reason takes the low road, and he is willing to follow it anywhere so long as it does not lead to the lion's den of the Absolute. James is the prophet of Humanism and uses his magnificient gifts of intellect and literary style to re-establish the maxim of the ancient Protagoras that "Man is the measure of all things"; he is, to use his own words, a tough-minded and radical empiricist; for him life is an adventure into the as yet undetermined and unknown future, and Truth is not something finished and absolutely fixed in "a block universe", but a product in the making, and in the making of which our human wishes and desires and the will to believe play an important part. Truth then lies in successful willing and not in a mental copying of an absolute and eternal pattern. James "damns the absolute" because it denies individual differences and personal freedom and leaves no room for "a real God, for real change and for real possibilities." Ideas and theories must then be understood not as images of eternal verities but as biological instruments which the organism evolves for experimentation and exploration of the environment. Hence Dewey's philosophy is called Instrumentalism. For Dewey, philosophy itself has value only as an instrument for promoting social welfare. This tendency to rescue philosophy from a barren intellectualism and make it dynamic for social values is a very healthy sign, but once again everything depends on how human welfare is to be conceived and determined. If the Absolute, like Nietzsche's God, is dead, we are left without an ultimate sanction and justification for our human values and must limit our notion of welfare to the satisfaction of our biological needs and at worst release the elementary force of the Will and call in question one of the greatest achievements of civilization, the purity of the Will to Truth.

Anti-intellectualism takes a different form in the philosophy of Bergson which reaffirms the maxim of Heraclitus that "everything changes". In this, Bergson is supported by the greatest modern cosmologist, Whitehead who denies that there are discrete and permanent substances in Nature and regards everything merely as a string of events. Reality is Process or a living flow which Bergson regards as a process of constant evolution with the *élan vital* as the thrusting force behind it. As opposed to Whitehead, Bergson maintains that the intellect is incapable of grasping this living flow in its inwardness, since it congeals the flow into solid objects and breaks up its continuity into discrete states of consciousness. The

intellect is created by the *élan vital* for purposes of action and so cannot embrace life of which it is an emanation. It is only by intuition that we can grasp the true nature of things. Bergson's intuition, however, is not the luminous and ineffable experience of the mystics, but something primitive and biological in character. Nor is Bergson's *élan vital* much superior to the blind force of the materialist, for there is no divine consummation towards which the process of evolution tends.

The pragmatic view that the truth of an idea lies in its successful application or verification makes pragmatism closely allied to what appears to be the dominant philosophy of the twentieth century in the West, viz., Logical Positivism. Positivism as such is hostile to any metaphysics that deals with super-sensible realities, but the modern positivists have carried this unreasoned antipathy to God to a rather ridiculous extent. They assert that since only those statements have meaning which can be verified in sense experience, statements concerning the so-called super-sensible realities are not even false but strictly meaningless. Thus both "God exists" and "God does not exist" are nonsense statements for they have no application within the field of our five senses.

Russell, though not a representative of this school, leans heavily towards it and has this in common with it that he rejects metaphysics and confines all knowledge to mathematics and the empirical sciences. The true philosopher according to him is not the system-builder but one who patiently analyses and explains the concepts of science and commonsense with the help of what he calls "the powerful logical technique of modern analytical empiricism". Philosophy is simply science becoming self-conscious and critical of its own concepts. It brings no message from the Eternal and makes no pronouncements on the value of human life and its final destiny. The universe shows a total indifference to our hopes and aspirations, and for aught we know "the march of unconscious power may trample down our ideals". Hence "for man it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day".

The world today is in a painful chaos in which all our values have been overturned and laid low. There is yet a great hunger among people all over the world for a new light and a new message of hope that will lead them out of their present bewilderment. It seems unlikely that philosophy in the West today with its denial of absolute values and its glorification of our primitive and libidinous nature can provide an answer to that aspiration. Even the absolutism of the English Hegelians is barren, because it makes no

provision for the regeneration of man and ends on the agnostic note that "in the end all is beyond us". In this babel of confused tongues there is only one voice in the world of philosophy today that speaks as one possessing authority. Sri Aurobindo is widely known as a mystic and saint, but few realize that he possesses too a commanding intellect that is capable of a rigorous logic and an austere clarity of expression. He is, to borrow his own words, "a metaphysician doubled with a Yogi". Sri Aurobindo would agree with Dewey that philosophy should be a dynamic force in social reconstruction, for his goal is not the world-denying Nirvana of Buddhism and Mayavada Vedanta. But he would insist that philosophy can be socially useful only if it is essentially dynamic for the realisation of Absolute Truth.

Rejecting partial solutions, Sri Aurobindo reconciles in his integral vision the Absolute and the process of evolution, Absolutism and Humanism. The Divine and the human are indifferent to each other, only if the Divine is turned into a conceptual abstraction or the human is pulled down to the infra-rational level which is the meeting point of the animal and man. Sri Aurobindo makes the Divine lean to the human and raises the human to the Divine. The limitation of James' Humanism consists in keeping man chained to his physical, vital and mental nature and denying or ignoring the divine Presence seated in the hearts of all beings. By opening to the Divine within "the soul's horizon widens to measureless sight", leading to the ineffable "outburst of the Godhead in man."

The secret presence of the Divine Consciousness in all things explains too the real drive and meaning of the process of evolution. The evolutionary will or *élan* is only apparently unconscious, but in reality is a self-veiling Power or Shakti of the supreme Consciousness which is its secret Guide and Master. Evolution thus is not a stumbling half-lit adventure into the unknown, but has for its divinely decreed purpose the manifestation of the Divine itself in the earth-consciousness and the human body, leading to the fulfilment of Kant's dream of a Kingdom of Ends in the establishment of a spiritual society in which the emphasis will have shifted from the outward and instrumental to the inward and intrinsic values. This view of evolution as a veiled manifestation of the Supreme enables us to understand each term in the evolutionary series as the true intention and reality of the preceding term. The materialist in evolution takes hold of the process from the blind end and so explains it only by an ignorant denial of everything that transcends his formula of Matter in motion. Now, just as Matter

is the veil of life and life the veil of mind, so the mind too must be regarded as a veiled form of a higher consciousness which Sri Aurobindo calls the supramental or the Truth-Consciousness, which still awaits a descent and an unfoldment in human nature. The mind or reason being a product of evolution with Inconscience as its base is conditioned by ignorance, and hence a movement that takes the mind for its guide is, says Sri Aurobindo, an evolution in the Ignorance. But in recognising the inadequacy of reason we must not commit the mistake of Bergson and the pragmatists of becoming anti-intellectualists; rather we should seek for that higher consciousness or intuition which transcends both our rational and animal nature. Sri Aurobindo like Dewey is an instrumentalist with this radical difference that he regards the intellect as an instrument not of the animal in us but of the divine indwelling spirit which is our true being.

The vital significance of Sri Aurobindo's thought for our times is that according to him human evolution has reached a stage when it is preparing for the next advance. Just as the mental being has evolved from the animals, so from the human race must evolve a race of supramental or gnostic beings. This Supermind is the highest mode of manifestation of the Divine Consciousness and what makes the emergence of the Supermind different from any previous emergence is that it has the power to transform and divinize the whole being of man down to the very cells of the body.

The Supramental being must not be confused with the Nietzschean Superman. "Nietzsche", says Sri Aurobindo, "hymned the Olympian, but presented him with the aspect of the Asura, with the stern convulsed visage of the Titan", whereas if human Godhead is the goal to which the race must advance, we should owe our allegiance to the divinity that confronts us "with a clear, joyous and radiant countenance". True supermanhood is the divine and harmonious Absolute of all that is essential in man. Sri Aurobindo thus stands as the herald of a new age of humanity and perhaps also as its Master-Leader.

Sri Aurobindo is not unaware that "confusion, trouble, disorder and upset everywhere is the general state of things", but adds confidently that "the better things that are to come are preparing or growing under a veil". All of us may not share his optimism because we do not share his vision, but we cannot help hearkening to his voice when he says, "The descent of the Supramental, is an inevitable necessity in the logic of things and is therefore sure. This will be enough to change the world and to change Nature by breaking down her present limits. But what, how, by what degrees it will

do, it is a thing that ought not be said now; when the Light is there, the Light will itself do its work, when the Supramental Will stands on earth, that Will will decide. It will establish a perfection, a harmony, a Truth-creation—for the rest, well, it will be the rest—that is all".

J. N. CHUBB

*Sādhana Sāmrājyam**

Sovereign Sway of Sadhana

(Continued from last issue)

7. Are we then to rest like morons? No, the foothold, the root of these thinkings must be searched for first. If an infant, unfit to stand, has (therefore) not got the gait firm and steady, how can he attempt at climbing the hill or running fast?[1]

Does it then mean that we are to cease from thinking, voluntarily forfeit the special faculty developed in man and regress to the level of an automaton or an unthinking animal? And if we do so, where would we be? Is it not out of these mental activities in various fields that the best part of man the thinker has sprung up? The workings of the mind are the very things that hold man at the top of creation and in desisting from them we shall cease to be men. Are we expected to do that? No, says the author. We are not called upon to eliminate the mind in its proper role. On the other hand, we are asked to find the true basis on which alone the mind is intended to function. The thoughts are not the mind itself at its base, in its essence. They are rather the products of the mind-activity. But the seat of the mind *in actu* is to be found in the mind *in situ* and it is this radical background that holds, and against which pass the thought-

* Sanskrit verses of Sri T. V. Kapali Sastry, translated into English with annotation by M. P. Pandit.

[1] किमस्मादस्माभिर्विमतिभिरिव स्थेयमिति चेत्
विचेयं चिन्तानां प्रथममिह मूलं स्थितिपदम् ।
अयुक्तः स्थातुं चेच्छिशुरनुपलब्धध्रुवगतिः
किमद्रेरारोहे त्वरितगमने वा प्रयतताम् ॥७॥

movements, that is to be searched for and got at to get a true measure of the activities of the mind. "The mind is essentially calm in its pure nature" and to evaluate correctly and regulate our thoughts we must first get at the very base on which they stand, to get into the Quiet at the back of the mind which alone could give the right perspective and prepare the ground for the fuller light to guide the mind in action. Until that is done, to busy with the mind and run with its flights is as dangerous and foolish as it is for an infant who has not yet found his feet firm to attempt a run or climb the hill.

8. Let him sport who is clever in reasoning in the plentiful arena of the mind's domain; let him who is skilled in bearing the load of the 'mine' carry the baseless burden; let the bee search for (to enjoy) the lotus in the sky without direction (or hope); (on our part) let us with firm steps in the gait, settle in the Quietude![1]

But human temperaments vary and each nature inclines to the line to which it is strongly attracted There are those with special aptitude for the exercise of their mental faculties and theirs is the eidolon of the Reason. Nothing is valid until it passes the test of the mind's reasoning. Not only things proper to the realm of the Reason, but those above it are also required to be rationally processed if they are to be accepted. The domain of the mind knows no frontiers because it rotates round its own axle and to those who worship at the shrine of Reason alone, not even the existence of God can pass muster unless it can be logically proved to be tenable. All must fit into the four corners of the reasoning mind in its fanciful flights. That is the story of Philosophy in the West and to some extent the later developments in the dialectics of Indian Philosophy. Let such, says the author, luxuriate in the never-ending expanse of the mind's vegetation. We cannot argue and convince them, for doubt and argument exist for their own sake and cannot be eliminated by mental means. We cannot

मनोराज्ये प्राज्ये विहरतु जनस्तर्कचतुरो
निराधारं भारं वहतु ममतोद्वाहनिपुणः।
निराशेऽप्याकाशे भजतु कमलं वा मधुकरो
वयं तुष्णींभावे ध्रुवपदगतैः स्याम कृतिनः ॥८॥

convince either him who is wedded (*udvāha*) to the sense of my-ness, *mamatā* (note the appropriateness of the word *udvāha*, *mamatā* being feminine). He is so much obsessed with his own sense of importance and responsibility, his own ego, that his vision gets clouded. He identifies himself with all that properly speaking, does not belong to him; he assumes responsibilities which are either wholly unreal or never meant to be shouldered by him in the present state of his ignorance and inaptitude. It is his ego which leads him to multiply his self-created problems. Such a one is best left to himself and his brood of worries. Both the logician and the egotist can be allowed to busy themselves with their labours which ultimately come to nothing, proceeding as they do in an unreal vacuum. The analogy of *gaganāravinda* is given to bring home the ridiculousness of the situation. The *aravinda*, lotus grows only in water and never in the empty spaces of the sky! Still if the bee thristing for honey in the lotus, not knowing where to find it, goes on searching for the same in the vastnesses of the sky with no sense of direction (or with no reasonable hope), what could it expect to find at the end of its labours? Nothing. Yet the bee must be allowed to go through its repetitive rounds, the logician to spin out cobwebs of his mental constructions, the egotist to solve the problems of his own making. We on our part shall learn to divest ourselves of our mental and vital (egoistic) trappings and proceed to find our poise in the Quietude that is ever at the back of our external personality. Only thus can we hope to acquire the minimum firmness and solidity in our gait on the road to Truth and cease to be carried away by the raging storms of the world of mental movement.

9. Enough is the seeing and seeing of the crowd of things sensual that are like bubbles. Enough is the waiting and waiting upon the host of Gods in whose gift are the joys of the world. Enough with discussion, wordy and dry, entwining and stale. Meditation on *Sāmba* the Lord with his Shakti even once, reveals the Glory of Silence.[1]

[1] अलं दर्शं दर्शं विषयपटलीं बुद्बुदनिभां
अलं भावं भावं भुवनसुखदं दैवतगणम् ।
अलं कृत्वा चर्चामरसपदजालार्थजरठां
सकृत् साम्बध्यानं प्रथयति हि मौनस्य विभवम् ॥९॥

But how to get at the quietude?

The first requisite is to withdraw our gaze from the objects of the senses which hold our attention fixed on to them. The multifarious and fleeting objects in the world that rise and fall, appear and disappear like bubbles, exercise a strong fascination over our senses as fodder to cattle. Our consciousness is habituated to occupy itself with this floating panorama of sense-objects. As long as it continues to be attracted and held by this spectacle it cannot turn to anything else. So enough of this distracting crowd. There is no end to it, unless we choose to end its hold on us by withdrawing our sight from it, to begin with. Enough also of this preoccupation with the cares of the world and running after joys. People invoke the aid of the higher powers, the Gods and wait on them for some miraculous interventions when they find themselves unequal to the situations they are faced with. Even when their wants are fulfilled for the time being, new wants crop up and thus they are frequently, if not perpetually, in want and hence miserable. Hence our aim must be lofty, says the poet, and the result of our endeavour enduring and worthy of the soul that is superior to human nature. We shall not waste any more time upon austerities whose one aim is to enable ourselves to enjoy better this ignorant and half-lit life in which we are revolving. We will not waste time either in discussions, interminable wordy battles in which the mind loves to revel. These acrobatics may be satisfying to the mental vanity of man, but they help him little. On the other hand they mislead him into believing that inelllectual comprehension is the be-all and end-all of man, the mental being. The mind contents itself with abstract reasonings and conclusions whereas in fact it has hedged itself with bewildering circuits of wordy formulas. The mind goes through the same rounds again and again and its labours are pronouncedly repetitive, stale.

These are the three habits to be eschewed viz. indulgence in the fleeting procession of sense-objects, preoccupation with means and disciplines to glorify and aggrandise the little ignorant life we normally lead, and enslavement to the mechanical habits of the mind, before we can hope to come under the sway of the Silence. One can not force and effect an entry into this Silence. It is there at the back of everything, supporting in its solidity all that exists in it and it opens out on him who has no barriers to prevent its spread. One has only to disencumber oneself and allow the silence to settle in him. An initial gathering up of one's consciousness which is normally spread out in a thousand directions, and its release in meditation upon the Lord with his Shakti, is indicated as the easiest means of a fruitful

waiting for the entry of the Silence into one's being. It is not a long and arduous process. A sincere and aspiring meditative effort even once serves to prepare the necessary opening through which the Silence begins to take hold of the being.

Having thus far dwelt upon the meandering course of the mind, the futility of its labours and the necessity of release from its clamping clutches into the freer reaches of Quietude, the author indicates that meditation, worship of the Lord is the one effective means of opening into the Silence of which quietude is the vestibule. What is this meditation? How is the Lord to be invoked and worshipped? The next verse proceeds to begin the exposition of the line of approach that forms the subject-matter of the Theme—the Sadhana.

10. This is the prime and initial part of our line of the Supreme's worship: "All this is Thine, not ours; Thou art the proprietor of the worlds." Success, then, in the achievement—great or small be the instrument—rests with the Lord of Supreme Power; we here on our part keep to the Stillness in adoration.

That there are many disciplines for Godward approach is well known. Apart from the esoteric disciplines of Mysticism all over the world, there are the traditional lines of Yoga in India, each with a different basis of approach, process of working and different stress of realisation, though the broad goal of all is the same viz. union with the Divine. Each of them has its own steps or *padas* to be passed through one after the other. And this Sadhana, this line of approach proper to the Truth of God and all existence as envisaged here has also its characteristic limbs, of which the primary and the initial part, the *purva-anga*, is described in this verse. It lies in a sincere, deep feeling shaping a radical and active attitude on the part of the seeker that all verily belongs to the Supreme One, the Lord, nothing belongs to man and that He the Divine is the world's Owner and lodger in many souls and forms of being. This is a truth of life, of creation itself

[1] इदं नः पूर्वाङ्गं परमपुरुषाराधनविधे–
स्तवेदं नास्माकं निखिलमिति नाथोऽसि जगताम् ।
अतः सिद्धिः साध्ये महति करणे वाऽप्यणुनि वा
महाशक्तायत्ता वयमिह तु जोषं सभजनाः ॥१०॥

which it is imperative on every seeker to feel first in the heart or intellectually comprehend and then to make of it a living knowledge and ruling principle of his life. Man, in his ignorance, claims to own and enjoy as much of the universe as he can. But what after all is this man? He is "a composite of material elements constituting the physical body which is a portion and product of the physical universe with life and its activities as well as mind moving round the ego-centric individual existence. Just as the gross body derives its existence from the physical universe, so also individual life in the body belongs to the world of Life and is a canalised unit flowing from it; the same is true with the individual mind also as that is but a portion of the universal Mind. If, then, we look at our bodily existence along with the activities of life and mind in this larger manner it will be easy to find that we wrongly identify ourselves with what are not ourselves but what really are part and parcel of universal Matter, universal Life and universal Mind." (*Lights on the Upanishads* by Sri Kapali Sastry) And the universal Life, Mind and Matter are, to use the potent phrase of the Upanishad, the Lord himself *abroad*, the Superme in extension or manifestation. All is He, all is His. He the Lord pervading is the warp and woof of the peoples, *sa otah protasch vibhuh prajāsu* (White Yajurveda 32.8)

It is not enough that this knowledge forms part, even an important part, of the intellectual make-up of the individual. It should be a living faith of the soul, a kind of light at the centre illuminating every corner of his being in all its activities. All must be governed by this fundamental perception. Once this attitude is firmly established, important consequences ensue. The seeker, now that he recognises the Supreme as the Lord of all, the Dispenser of all, comes to see that even success in his effort does not depend upon his personal exertion alone but upon the Will of the Lord. He has only to offer himself entirely to the Will of the Lord whatever it be. He has no need to lament over his impossible failings, for it is not his effort that is going to decide the success or failure even as it is not the vaunted strength of the puny individual that really settles the matter. It is ultimately the Lord, the Master of Strength who decides and gets his will executed through whatever instrument he chooses—be it intrinsically great or small, for the strength that effects is the Lord's and not the seeker's, who is but an instrument. Gathered in this unshakable faith and knowledge, we keep ourselves still in the silence, in adoration of the Lord, for only so can the Lord's will and strength find unobstructed passage in us.

11. With this prime part without break, in the still and loney land, in the abode of the Flame set in silence, awakened and intact, profound without noise, when the Divine's play shines in one's face with blooming eyes, this world's kingdom becomes adorable, as the home of the World's Lord.[1]

When this condition is well set, that is, when the whole being of the seeker recognises the overlordship of the Supreme and opens out in a settled poise of utter surrender to His will, the world around begins to appear to him in a different hue. It is no more the multitudes of creatures with their restless clamour that dominate the scene. It is the all-pervading presence of the One, the ineffable Silence that invites him wherever he turns. Within himself, when the clang and rush of effort, responsibility and care die out, there is a certain release in the consciousness retiring into the inner layers of quietude. Man awakens to deeper strata of being where there is a happy silence, where he begins to feel there is his true centre. And there in the silent chamber of the heart he discovers that fire of aspiration for the Divine which has been so long lying latent, slumbering, but now under conditions more congenial to its rise, has got kindled, awakened and leaps up to a growing flame. Silence in the mind and life-parts are the most indispensable conditions for this flame to be increasingly active. The flame is smothered in the enveloping smoke of desires, passions and restless movements. It gets dissipated, interrupted and that is why periods of intense aspiration in the seeker are not continual, they are often intermittent. But under the new conditions the flame is steady, 'intact', and lights and warms up the entire corridors of the being which is now increasingly free from the turmoil of the usual activities and is filled with a profound silence. The play of the Divine is already at work in the seeker, it exudes an irrepressible cheer, a current of constant joy—since that is its inalienable nature—which expresses itself in the brightness of the visage, the blooming of the eye. The eye is the window in the physical frame for the soul, and the delectation of the soul is perceptible in the lustre of the eye. It is then that the expanse of the world appears differently. It presents itself in its

[1] अभङ्गे पूर्वाङ्गे निभृतभुवि निश्शब्दकलिते
प्रबुद्धे सन्नद्धे ज्वलनसदने मौनगहने।
हसन्नेत्रे वक्त्रे स्फुरति सति दैवस्य लसिते
जगद्राज्यं पूज्यं भवति जगदीशस्य भवनम् ॥११॥

true role as the habitation of the Supreme Lord and for that reason adorable and cherishable. The seeker is set in the right frame to gain a proper and truer perspective and the world is seen by him not as an illusion or an impediment to be done away with, but as a sacred dwelling place of the Lord and as such claiming particular attention from those that seek to serve Him.

12. When the mind is without repose, contact with the World's Master is not settled. When the inner flame in the heart's mansion is fast alseep, all is accursed (lit. done to ashes). And, while a joyless difference dominates the entire world, how can the creature see in it the mansion of the Supreme Splendour?[1]

Obviously this realisation could not be expected in the normal conditions under which man is obliged to live. His mind is restless, busy with fleeting impressions and objects and this preoccupation prevents whatever contact with the Divine one may have from being constant and active. The perversive movement of the mind interrupts its continuance. When the fire of godward aspiration is 'asleep', i.e. latent, there is really no savour in life. All is dry and dull with nothing to enthuse the inner self of man. The soul of man is happy only when it progresses, and is allowed to progress. The awakening and the rise of the Flame within is at once the impelling force and testifying witness to the progress that is being forged and this consciousness suffuses the entire being with happiness. But when the fire lies unkindled and the soul is morose, it feels betrayed by the rest of the being which is either not ready or not willing to help it in its onward journey. No spiritual progress could be expected under such adverse conditions.

Again, normally creatures and forms are separate and separated and not merely physically but in consciousness also. They always meet in friction. Contact between the diverse forms with which the world is peopled is mostly of a disharmonious kind; each looks to its own growth and well-being and impinges upon the other only with a view to its self-aggrandisement. A continual state of war thus seems to govern the relations of

[1] अविश्रान्ते स्वान्ते भुवनपतिसक्तिर्न नियता
प्रसुप्तान्तर्ज्वाले हृदयभवने दग्धमखिलम्।
असन्मोदे भेदे सकलमधितिष्ठत्यपि जगत्
कथं पश्येज्जन्तुः परममहसो मन्दिरमिदम् ॥१२॥

forms in creation. Even mutual arrangements for association etc. are a *pis aller*, their sole function being a promotion of a more efficient growth of the constituent individual units. This fact of multiplicity in creation—a multiplicity apparently devoid of any mutuality and harmony but marked by a rigid exclusiveness on the part of each—is what strikes the average mind. Unable to pierce through this apparent multiplicity into the truth of Oneness underlying it, the mind sees the world as a mere conglomeration of so many diverse, disharmonious formations. How could it see in it the abode of the Splendour that is Divine?

(*to be continued*)

T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

AMERICAN STUDENTS' REACTIONS TO SRI AUROBINDO

THE spirit of American youth today is quite different from what most foreigners believe it to be. American materialism is dead and even the restricted intellectualism and stubbornly predujiced scientism is beginning to take on the smell of the past whenever it appears among young people, the smell of moth balls with which someone is desperately trying to preserve old-fashioned and thoroughly out of date hangovers of the past period.

In fact, it is almost regrettable to observe how the scientific spirit, which after all has had its great contributions to the evolution of man today, is rapidly falling into discredit during these recent years. The advertising slogan, heard over the radio so many times: "it has been scientifically proven," seems to provoke more smiles from day to day than to impress as it did only recently.

The gods of the past are being disenthroned rapidly. It is one of the thrills of living in America today to hear all around the noise of tumbling idols that only yesterday seemed established forever.

What is there by being created is a vacuum. That is the most fertile situation for the coming transformation, which is already appearing in many corners. And into this questioning openness falls the vision of Sri Aurobindo. Here I shall report some personal observations that may throw a certain light on the ways by which super-mental influences press down on a disintegrating mentality.

Sri Aurobindo's works have been used as text books in a number of my courses at Stanford University in California, courses on Comparative Religion, Indian Philosophy, Indian Literature, the Bhagavadgita and Contemporary India. These courses which are not required by any department at the University are taken by the students completely voluntarily and solely because of their interest in these studies. This interest has rapidly increased

in recent years. While the special and somewhat advanced courses on Indian Philosophy and the Bhagavadgita draw an enrollment of twenty-five to thirty Upper Division and graduate students, the courses on Comparative Religion is taken by students of all ages and recently has grown to an enrollment of over 300. Under such circumstances to realize one's responsibilities is the major task.

Every time when in the course of the lectures I arrive at the point where Sri Aurobindo can be introduced, I notice a strange hush falling over the audience; The students forget to write notes, forget to joke with each other, forget practically themselves and their appearance, and listen intently in complete absorption. I am sure this is not due to any oratorical devices on my part, but simply due to the fact that they all feel that now something relevant is going to be introduced into their lives for which they have been waiting a long, long time. The very first quotations from Sri Aurobindo's writings have each time this transforming effect on the audience. In numerous conversations with students it has appeared that it is not primarily any of the metaphysical points of Sri Aurobindo's system, not so much his descriptions of higher planes of consciousness that attract any of the students, but his giving us a task to perform, a thrilling, exciting task. For the young people of this generation are all too willing to work if only they knew for what. They are not aroused by any doctrine that goes as far as the salvation of their own souls only; in fact, they do not combine any worthwhile idea with such a prospect, unless they can see a task ahead to be performed that will give meaning and value to their existence.

At the end of the courses I have several times asked the students to write down their reaction to Sri Aurobindo, not to be graded, but entirely outside of the examination for my personal information only. They have freely declared their doubts about this or that point in Sri Aurobindo's system, usually on the basis of an insufficient understanding of it. But they have prevailingly expressed their amazement about the fact, that such a great and inspiring philosophy could possibly exist in our time, and that they personally have thereby been relieved from their earlier skepticism, agnosticism and pessimism.

I shall proceed now to quote literally some typical statements:

"*The Life Divine* has proposed an answer to one question which has never before been answered for me. I had worried about the 'why' of evolution and of creation. I had studied some religion and some philosophy and

finally concluded it was for the happiness of man, or actually of specific 'men'. The object of a person's life is to be happy and religion and philosophy are means to that end. But then again was another question—so what? What does it mean that men are evolved and created to be happy? Here everything seems to stop and yet that doesn't seem a sufficient reason for the whole involved creation and evolution. Aurobindo has offered the first answer which has seemed to me to be at all satisfying. Men are simply instruments in the evolving principle *which has a purpose outside of man himself*. This idea had not been offered before."

"*The Life Divine* is a stimulating book. I cannot read it without feeling that there is purpose in everything. He raises questions in my mind frequently, only to answer them in the next paragraph or chapter."

"The impact of this book on me was stronger than anything I had read before."

"*Life Divine* fulfills the need of everybody....This is the one philosophy that gives us a future instead of a past."

"I think in several ways *Life Divine* has been the most thought-provoking book I've read recently. Almost an unending stream of questions can come from viewing his assertions."

"In the writings of Sri Aurobindo there is a single quality which both arrests my mind by its claim of authenticity and compels my interest because it speaks to all that is unfulfilled within me...*The Life Divine* accepts as a guiding principle that it must take into account every element of experience and penetrate its significance, both as it is and what it is capable of becoming, can lay claim to proposing the most truthful hypothesis to which a life may be devoted...

"There is another effect which Aurobindo's writings have which sometimes is very alarming. Nothing I read seems novel, everything read is recognized, it is as if I had forgotten it and Aurobindo was reminding me of what I have always known. This is hard to stomach for a person who has thought of himself as highly critical."

"Before beginning a study of Aurobindo I had focussed upon a question. How resolve the conflict between the inner leadings in me to enter the path of renunciation, withdrawal into a monastic meditative existence, a whole giving of yourself in quiet waiting, and simultaneously with developing experience in this direction there was an insistent need for dedicated action. The turmoil took this form: how could there be dedicated action without a consistent awareness of God in being possessed by God—and how is this

possible save by the contemplative life such as portrayed by John of The Cross?

"Needless to say, Aurobindo has provided the synthesis with this question. Called attention to other latent problems and again applied his synthetic vision."

"Thru Aurobindo I found suggestion of a depth and meaning in the world and in myself, that shocked me out of the customary intellectual attitude of the day."

"It seems to me that Aurobindo has explained, with unusual clarity, the nature and significance of one's spiritual nature in relation to God. He succeeds in putting across a new perspective in terms which I find much easier to understand than the few people I have read in the Christian heritage."

"I started Aurobindo's book about four times each time, I never got past page one—the fifth time, I started it and I am still reading.....

"Aurobindo's book is important to me for a reason he gives in his first chapter: it says, in essence: the human aspiration is for order, harmony and the manifestation of God. I saw a cartoon once that states the same thing in a more humorous manner: a man walked up to an information booth and said, 'Why am I here? how do I fit into the infinite scheme of things?' Man *wants* order, meaning; just drifting along is not satisfying. Aurobindo gives a key to this harmony and order."

"My reactions to the *Life Divine* are both positive and negative.

"I think that it is probably one of the most extensive metaphysical systematizations that has been attempted in the history of philosophy. It has come out just when the world is most in need of a powerful affirmation of the reality of existence, of the nature of the Divine. Most important, however, is the position which Sri Aurobindo gives to man in his ontology. He does not relegate man to the position of a slave of divine determination. He makes man responsible for what he will become and, in this way makes him supremely conscious of his actions. Religious leaders have arisen before who have said that man should act according to the will of God, but such a weak and negative approach to man's responsibility left a lot to be desired. These men have reminded man that his salvation lies, in part at least, in his actions.

"Sri Aurobindo, however, has affirmed that not only does man's own salvation lie in the performance of activity for the sake of the Divine, he says that the fulfilment of the Divine purpose in the world can only be

attained by the activity of man. The salvation of the self for the sake of the attainment of a heavenly state or of liberation is an essentially egoistic activity. Man, he says, can only transcend his ego if he acts only for the basis of all existence, the Divine in all things."

"Aurobindo; impressions:

Man seeks to be whole in every country. The formulation of the total philosophy in the manner of working out each element in its own significance, then interrelating it with other aspects in a total picture, culminating in a single unifying truth for all mankind results in the deepest of satisfaction for the truth-seeker. One feels that nothing has been left out.

"Not only this precise formulation, but the magnificent and powerful spirit that blows through all the works inspires at a subterranean level. A person who delves becomes infused with the sense of a philosophy taking hold of all of himself, rather than merely his intellectual faculties.

"The way in which the philosophy is lived might be misunderstood, and misunderstandable because of the differences in cultures, customs, history. But the truth uttered seems utterly and completely familiar—and would be to one in any culture, for it hits the basic unity that pervades us all."

"I have found in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo a beautiful, a complete synthesis of all the tangled ideas which I held concerning God and the world. But more than this he brings in an explanation of evolution which so completes and explains science and biology that he gives me a new standpoint from which to look at all that is around and all that is happening."

"The most impressive fact in the *Life Divine*, for me, is Aurobindo's unflinching, absolutely irretrievable insistence that if a man is to effect any significant change upon his life and his world, that change must come from within himself as the result of wholeheartedly—with complete aspiration—serving the supreme purpose of Sachchidananda. Everyone is all too ready to work and struggle on superficial levels with the latest penacea —whether it be socialism, a new ethic, psychological statistics—as the instrument for perfecting himself, his life, the life of others—in other words, for perfection. In this way a man or a woman may shunt off a part of responsibility, saying, 'This much for me, this much for charity,' like a miser weighing out his gold....."

"But more and more persons are looking for something deeper, are turning their spiritual intensities more within, are realizing their desperate need for spiritual harmony instead of strife."

"The chapter on the triple transformation with its description of the perfecting of a man, enumerating the dangers and false powers that can be encountered by seeking for the inner being without having perfected the physical nature first—brings up the immediate question of the how. If the purpose of the *Life Divine* is to remove the intellectual barriers, and demonstrate the practical validity of the way—then where is the opportunity for seekers to obtain the 'how.' Integral Yoga is reported to be a complicated but effective way, if a sure guide is to be found. Is America to migrate to India, or will the complete Synthesis on Yoga be published for America as a book guru? It is surely an unfinished job to do so remarkably well with the 'what' and ignore the 'how.'"

"I can say that I was immensely impressed with the scope of its purpose, the unassailable logic it employs in its arguments, the all-containing and comprehending breadth, its synthesizing of much of the divergent paths of Western materialistic philosophies, the sureness of its right, and the complete removal of any possible hesitancy concerning the validity of its statements.

"Sri Aurobindo writes with great conviction and persuasion."

A husky football player who is not considered a good student and doesn't like philosophizing too much, has this to say:

"Reading The *Life Divine* has given me great personal pleasure. I can think of nothing I've ever read which sounds so pleasant to the ear. I admit I don't understand all of it.

"Upon first being introduced, so to speak, to Sri Aurobindo, through his book and, in turn, being introduced to his philosophy, one has the feeling of being ushered into a great and spacious room with thousands of chairs all about. Sri Aurobindo is your guide and he tells you, or rather points out to you, that you may sit in any of these chairs, or you may sit in all the chairs or again, if you like, you may bring your own chair, if there is not one present to your liking. In other words, he does not tell you that you must act this way or you must do this or that in order to be happy in life or to achieve salvation."

A point that is being emphasized again and again in these student reports is their amazement at the "tolerance" of Sri Aurobindo for other philosophy systems and various forms of cultural expressions:

"What strikes me the most about the book and Aurobindo's philosophy, as seen through it, are his statements of the value of, or divine reason for, other philosophies and systems. Tolerance of everyone and everything is on every page."

"I was especially interested in the convicing testimony which in all fairness he presents for opposition views."

One of the most frequently repeated critisisms is directed against Sri Aurobindo's language, which is found hard to understand and, in their opinion, stands in need of a special dictionary or even of translating into more usual expressions.

"I have found the reading very involved and laborious."

"There is a gread need for a dictionary to explain the particular meaning Aurobindo ascribes to each capitalized word. At times he became so abstract that the faint images his words produced in my mind were reduced to nothing at all but bare words devoid of any sense."

"It was extremely difficult for me to understand, and I plan to read it many times before I hope to grasp it thoroughly, but yet I didn't have a feeling of being bogged down or confused intentionally in order to mask faults or weak points. It was rather a feeling of struggling to grasp a difficult premise, which, if accomplished, would aid you immeasurably in reaching some solution of your ever-present search."

"I believe that his writing hampers the understanding of his message to a great extent. I noticed, however, that as I went further along in the *Life Divine* that I was less and less hampered by the complicated construction of his sentences...

It is too bad that such an unimportant matter as this hampers the clarity of his expression. One might say, however, that this condition is good, in in a way, because only those people who are willing to work to get the full realization of his intuition will receive it."

Positive reactions to Sri Aurobindo's style are by no means missing. Here is an example:

"The expression of Aurobindo is tremendously inspiring. His command of the English language in being able to express the most tremendous statements in the most beautiful, strong courageous, uplifting energizing poetic manner enables the person to participate in an aesthetic way, in the very highest of the experiences he describes. The very being is fired by the mastery by which he conveys both ideas and experience in terms of the written word."

However, the most serious criticism is directed against Sri Aurobindo's emphasis on Brahmacharya. This is felt to be an anthropologically limited idea that may have its place in view of some speciality of Indian's sex feelings, no universal application. Of course, there is a great deal of reluctance on the part of the young people to whom such an idea is entirely new to accept

its validity in their own case, because they do not intend and do not see the necessity of renouncing something that has no negative implication to them. Young Americans today are particularly allergic to anything that may even faintly sound like the puritanic emphasis from which they are breaking away so wholeheartedly.

But beyond this limited and rather worldly point of view there is also a widespread feeling among the students that in order to live up to Sri Aurobindo's principle of transformation rather than escape, sex as well as all other earthly realities ought not to be given up but raised to a higher level. Sri Aurobindo points out in one of his letters that such a course is fraught with peril. I heard one student ask in reaction to this passage: "Since when is Sri Aurobindo avoiding dangers, if confronting and conquering them would mean a higher realization?"

On the basis of such observations I have come to the conclusion that what some bright young people mean by positive sex is something that does not fall under Sri Aurobindo's criticisms of sex as a whole, but contains already an element of transformation in it, which may faintly remind us of some of the Tantric ideas and practices.

Such are some observations that may be of interest to students of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy in India. First, it may be that many of the reactions, appreciative as well as critical, are equally heard in Indian circles and thus will evoke the joy of recognition, having a rather universal tinge. Second, it may be that some of the quoted statements will serve to adjust an opinion about American mentality that is still too widely held in India today.

The opportunity to study American students' reactions to Sri Aurobindo has been rather unique at Stanford during these recent years, in so far as no other American university has so consistently emphasized studies of Indian philosophy and of Sri Aurobindo's ideas. However, the students at Stanford University are in no way special students and the experiences encountered here would be likely to be repeated in any of the other hundreds of universities and colleges in the U.S.A. if given the same opportunities of learning.

FREDERIC SPIEGELBERG

(*Darpan Parvat*)

REVIEW

Hinduism and Eternal Verities *by Sanat Kumar Roy Chowdhuri.* Second Edition. pp. 82+IX. Price Rs. 2/-. Copies to be had of Das Gupta & Co., Ltd. 54/3, College St. Calcutta.

Speaking of Hinduism we are tempted to recall an interesting observation made on the subject in the American Encyclopedia of Religion: "It (Hinduism) is broad; it is tolerant; it has an absorptive quality which enables it to assimilate almost anything with which it comes into contact. When it was officially asked for census purposes, 'what constitutes a Hindu?', the only answer that one writer could find as satisfactory was this, 'Any one who says he is Hindu, is one' ".

And truly so. For Hinduism is more a way of life, a process of culture than a religion as such. The kind of exclusiveness, the rigidity and uniformity of worship and beliefs, priestly organisation on compulsory basis, and Dogma, that characterise other well-known religions are conspicuous by their absence from Hinduism. It is a natural organic development of the means for a many-sided growth of man from his original half-animal base into the highest perfection of manhood. It has evolved around certain eternal verities of life and embraces in its comprehensive sweep the whole range of creation itself. The book under review is a commendable effort to formulate in simple words the essentials of truths that underlie and support this vast edifice, and bears the impress of the author's learning, sincerity and zeal in calling for an understanding evaluation of the Sanatana Dharma.

"The word Hindu or Hinduism", he writes, "is not to be found in our Shastras. The corresponding word is Manava Dharma or simply Dharma which means stabilising Force, that which holds Humanity together. Religion, according to the Hindus, is not a matter of dogmas or creeds or beliefs...If the world is ever welded into one State and that State has a religion, it is only the Hindu religion as taught in the Upanishads and in the Srimad Bhagavadgita that can aspire to be the world-religion."(p. 2 & 3)

We are in substantial agreement with the spirit of this observation. For the only true religion of man is to learn to realise his identity with the Divine Being or Reality that stands behind as the self of himself and of the world and through it to realise his essential identity with the One and the All. And only that Religion which opens avenues of development in this direction to all who seek for it, regardless of every other factor, can claim universal acceptance. The Religion of the Hindus is that, or at any rate potentially that.

Classified under 25 heads, the treatise covers a large ground touching upon almost every important aspect of the Philosophy and Practice that go under the name of Hinduism. Creation, its process, the place of *avatars* as examined in the light of modern theories of Evolution, *Gunas* and their bearings, the well-known divisions of Time *yugas*, Deities are some of the topics. In a very useful chapter on the *Mantra* and *Shabda*, he observes: "The appearance of the Universe, of the various Devatas, are accompanied not only by the phenomena perceptible to the eyes, but also by sound, which could be heard, were our eyes perfect. The sound is, in essence, the same as the Devata. This sound at the appearance of a Devata, which is perceptible by the Yogis is the Bija Mantra of the Devata. The Hindus go further and say that given the Mantra the Devata is there. Mantra is the sound-form of the Devata" (p. 25). This is an important teaching of Tantras put in a nutshell.

A fairly exhaustive treatment of the various *chakras*, or subtle psycho-physical centres, in the system of man and the Kundalini Shakti at the base of the spine, follows in the chapter on Yoga. The connotation of Yoga is far wider than allowed to it in these pages by the author. "To terminate the cycle of Life and Death", "Attaining union with or a knowledge of Ultimate Cause" etc. are undoubtedly ends of Yoga, but only of certain types of them. Yoga can also be a means for the fullest development and perfection of man working for an increasing perfection of the world. It can be made the most effective means for translating into action the full significance of birth and creation summed up in the famous phrase of the seers, *sarvam khalu idam brahma*, all this is indeed the Brahman, all creation is verily divine. Divine it is in essence, divine it shall be in fruition.

A detailed description of *Prāna Pratishtha*—the ceremony by which the presence of the deity is invoked to enter the Image that is worshipped—(again a Tantric practice), the doctrine of Karma and rebirth, the place of Good and Evil in Hindu philosophy are some of the other subjects dealt

with. Speaking of Caste and the much ill-informed criticism directed against it, the author draws attention to the fact that originally *Varna* or class was just a functional classification or distinction and quotes from the Mahabharata in support (Shantiparva, Mokshadharma Ch.14, V. 10).

We cannot help observing, with a note of regret, that the author should have gone out of his way in many places to depreciate the value of other religions as if to enhance thereby the superiority of his own. Every religion has played an especial part in building up Human Progress. As Sri Aurobindo notes:

"Each religion has helped mankind. Paganism increased in man the light of beauty, the largeness and height of his life, his aim at a many-sided perfection; Christianity gave him some vision of divine love and chairty; Buddhism has shown him a noble way to be wiser, gentler, purer; Judaism and Islam how to be religiously faithful in action and zealously devoted to God; Hinduism has opened to him the largest and profoundest spiritual possibilities...All religions have saved a number of souls." (*Thoughts and Glimpses*)

M. P. PANDIT

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